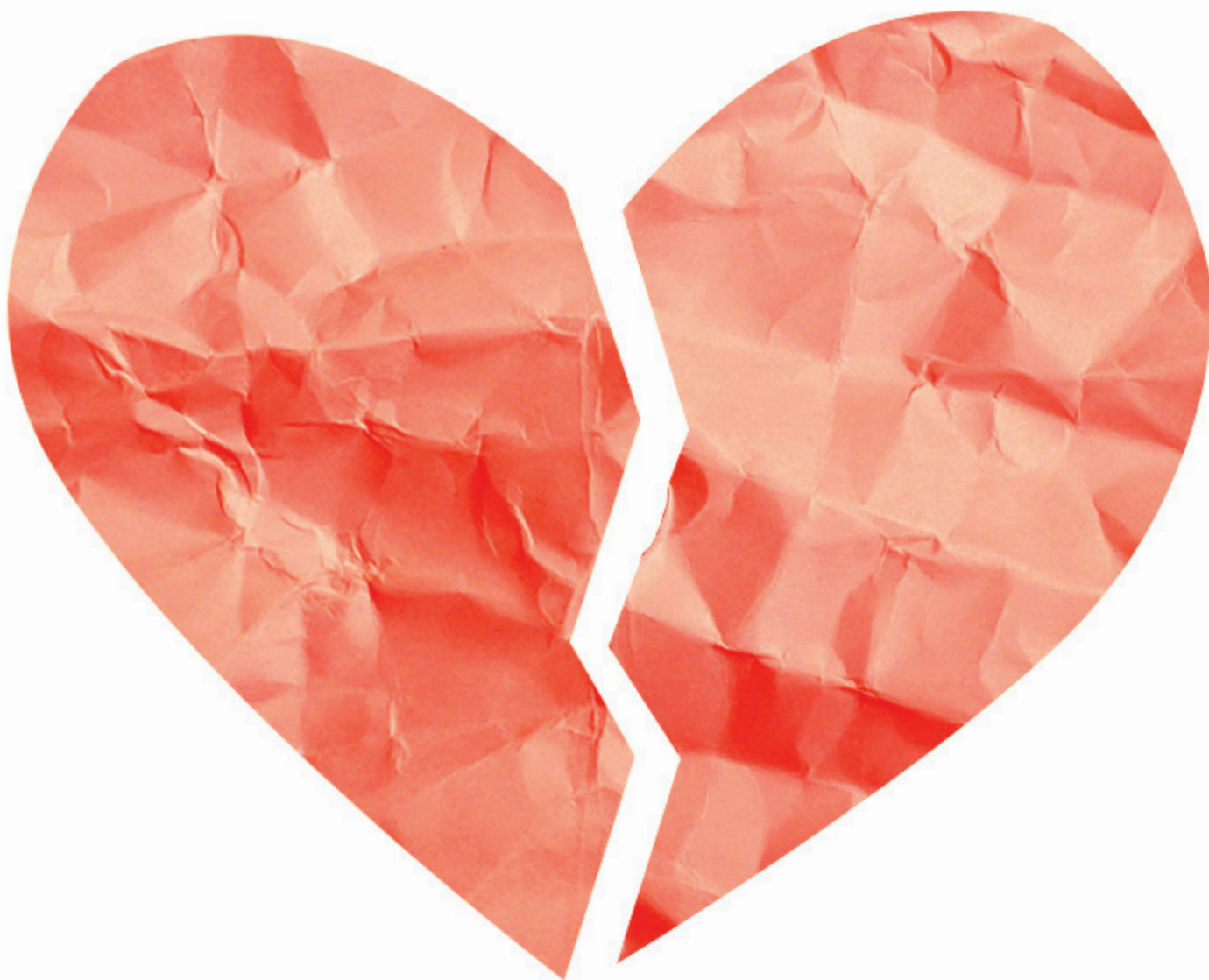


READER



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EDITORS IN CHIEF SUJAY KUMAR, KAREN HAWKINS
CREATIVE LEAD RACHEL HAWLEY
MUSIC EDITOR PHILIP MONTORO
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EDITORIAL ASSOCIATE S. NICOLE LANE
GRAPHIC DESIGNER AMBER HUFF
LISTINGS COORDINATOR SALEM COLLO-JULIN
CONTRIBUTORS ED BLAIR, NOAH BERLASKY, LUCA CIMARUSTI, MARISSA DE LA CERDA, MARI COHEN, JOSH FLANDERS, SHERI FLANDERS, JACK HELBIG, IRENE HSAIO, CATALINA MARIA JOHNSON, MONICA KENDRICK, STEVE KRAKOW, SUE KWONG, NOËLLE D. LILLEY, JAMIE LUDWIG, MAX MALLER, ADAM MULLINS-KHATIB, J.R. NELSON, JEFF NICHOLS, MARISSA OBERLANDER, MATTHEW SIGUR, CATEY SULLIVAN

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MEDIA PARTNERSHIPS COORDINATOR YAZMIN DOMINGUEZ
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THIS WEEK ON CHICAGOREADER.COM



Out of SPACE returns

June shows include George Clinton, Neko Case, Big Boi, and Drive-By Truckers.



What we loved at Sundance

From a film about a struggling playwright who raps to an adaptation of a series of viral tweets, here's what our writers recommend.



Ravinia finds a new conductor and curator

Marin Alsop takes on a newly created dual role at the music festival.

ON THE COVER: PHOTO BY MARZENA ABRAHAMIK.
FOR MORE OF MARZENA'S WORK, GO TO
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#BREAKUPRITUALS

How do you mend a broken heart?

We asked, you answered.

By **READER STAFF AND TWITTER CONTRIBUTORS**

Break ups suck! Do you have a break up playlist, TV show, book or any other break up ritual you practice during a heartbreak? Tag us with the #BreakupRituals hashtag for a chance to be published in our special Feb. 13 issue! #TindeRinPrint

OnTour Magazine @ontourmag

I allow myself one day of this nonsense. Watch-High Fidelity. Listen-Tom Waits. Drink-Chillable Red (a Franzia Production) Eat-The Dorito shards that slipped between couch cushions. #Breakuprituals #stayclassy

Layne Dixon @DefinitelyLayne

Read my tarot, pull the The Tower, cringe,

nod knowingly, look at my dog like “you seeing this?”, call my mom for the 7th time that day, journal about The Tower, lay down in the shower, lean into acceptance, repeat. + anything by @ilovelucius #BreakupRituals

Brianna Wellen @BriannaWellen

I love buying a bottle of wine, ordering

diner food in, and putting on Crazy Ex-Girlfriend (and living vicariously through Rebecca Bunch) cc: @Racheldoesstuff #BreakupRituals

katelyn harper @kharpersays

Breakups indeed suck but good jams can help ease your pain. After mine, I created “but first, forgiveness,” a playlist to help myself move on and to remember hate doesn’t get you very far. #BreakupRituals <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/6yi8m2i-31JiMFAEpFkrMue?si=6FD1lPztTRK7umY-Vdt5Dxg>

mark snyder @marksny08058756

“There’s a thorn tree in the garden”, the last track off the “Layla” LP

Carmen @_carmsolo

Lean in hard to heartbreak w/ Dismemberment Plan’s “Time Bomb”, Cafe Tacvba’s “Avientame”, “Waiting Game” by Banks and a whole lotta cat power. I make sure I take a strip of swollen photobooth pics in a bar w/ scotch. #BreakupRituals

miranda @pitymeforever

gotta get away from anything that reminds me of any man i’ve ever dated so first i listen to every frankie cosmos release on bandcamp then pick a christopher nolan movie to watch based on level of devastation #BreakupRituals

Karen Hawkins @ChiefRebelle

#BreakupRituals in no particular order:
-Watch Sense & Sensibility for the trillionth time
-Re-read a “You’re Gonna Be OK, Boo” letter I wrote to myself years ago for when relationship ish goes south
-Listen to @OfficialMeshell’s album Bitter on repeat

Tongue Tied Turtle @zachsparkyt

My #BreakupRituals is pretty simple; @Alanis “Jagged Little Pill” full volume on repeat, and do the screaming and anger into a pillow as to not disturb the neighbors. My ultimate cathartic pissed off album.

paige blockiana the 2nd @lee_thirty

#BreakupRituals I made a whole playlist of autotuned heartbreak songs inspired by 808s and heartbreak by Kanye it’s a very comforting winter experience lol maybe not for everyone but it helps me cope while also wanting to sing & dance <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/7oOR-2fuKx72XQym9IZgiQh?si=Oo6zzP7ZTs6VI-UxaycASyA>

Jack Shales @jackshales

I wrote and recorded breakup songs in Chicago a couple years ago. Writing and playing them helped me get over a 7-year relationship that ended suddenly #BreakupRituals

Janaya @janayagr

I go see SEVERAL movies. Live in a theater for a few days and listen to Mariah Carey to remember my badassery. #BreakUpRituals

Sue Kwong @sue_kwong

My #BreakupRituals: delete records of the person from social media (or mute them), and my physical journal. It’s cathartic to cross thoughts out. Boi, bye.

At the end of the day, no one is more reliable than my femme friends. So I’ll spend at least an afternoon w/ them; watch Daria, Studio Ghibli movies (or MARATHON on a weekend); cook or share comfort foods. I recommend pizza or Chinese.

PSA #BreakupRituals: avoid sensitive time with heterosexual people of opposite gender. Chances are they have romantic interests. Bois, bye.

wholesome content farm @lefttheprairie

The most powerful heartbreak healing magic was when @yo_uterus and I baked a cake while listening to Taylor Swift’s Red and talking about Margaret Atwood’s The Edible Woman. We only did it once but it’s sustained me through the last 7 years of singledom and dating #breakuprituals

Nidhi M @Nidhi_Ehm

Law & Order: SVU reruns #BreakupRituals

Audrey HepBurn Everything @noveldeadbeat

I listen to “You’re Not the One” by Sky Ferreira on repeat. It’s worked for the last 6-7 years 📺

FOOD & DRINK



From top, clockwise: *Pisto manchego*,
patatas bravas, *tortilla española* 📷 JEFF
MARINI FOR CHICAGO READER

RESTAURANT REVIEW

Little Madrid has tapas where you least expect them

A native Madrilenos in Andersonville knows how it's done.

By MIKE SULA

Francisco Bolanos wouldn't tell me how he makes the smoky *salsa brava* he dresses his fried potatoes with. Over the phone he told me it's a "family secret," though I swear he used the words "*jamón stock*" when he served them to me a few mornings earlier at Little Madrid Tapas Cafe, a cash-only Andersonville hole-in-the-wall that resets the standard for *patatas bravas* in a city enamored with Spanish food.

Bolanos, who presides over the raw storefront with a razor-sharp *jamónero* behind a

mounted haunch of Iberico ham, is not impressed by your *patatas bravas*, Chicago.

After he brought me, unbidden, an order of this quintessential tapa with my breakfast, I had to agree. The irregular chunks of fried potatoes are lightly frosted with salt, delicately crispy outside, soft and creamy within, and they're draped with the glossy "fire" sauce, smoldering with smoked pimenton. Bolanos says he's made the rounds of the city's nominal Spanish spots for this dish, and usually the potatoes are fried in something other than the Andalusian olive oil he gets from his

family's orchard, or the sauce is spiked with hot sauce that obscures the absence of say, *jamón stock* (or whatever it is).

Like most people, the 37-year-old former human rights lawyer has a barometer for authenticity that's determined by what he ate growing up versus what he can eat in his adopted city. His parents were professors who divided their time between South America and home, so he grew up cooking at his grandmother's side in Madrid. He asked that I not name the large intergovernmental organization he worked for in New York City

before he moved here, fed up with the law and intending to open a simple coffee shop and art gallery in an erstwhile Mexican restaurant. It got off to a rough start. He says he took a call at 2 AM and rushed over to find his carpenter lying on the floor bleeding amidst a collapsed ceiling and three bottles of tequila. Some \$13,000 in hospital charges later, he opened with the ceiling unfinished on December 22, surprising passersby stopping in for coffee and gluten-free pastries with slices of ham and bread.

By Christmas Day he'd shifted into full



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SUNDAY, MARCH 1, 2020
3pm-6pm

Location

THE VIOLET HOUR
1520 n. Damen ave., Chicago

Competitors

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ALLISON JUNE MITCHELL Chef's Special Cocktail Bar	ULISES MARTINEZ Mi Tocaya
CORI O'CONNOR Longman & Eagle	GRAHAM CROWE Two
	SHELLEY MAYEN Proxi
MARVIN BOEVING Moonflower	GRACE BERNOTAVICIOUS Ludlow Liquors
ANDREW MACKEY The Violet Hour	SCOTT LOBIANCO Cindy's Rooftop

Judges

GREGORY HALL Virtue Cider Founder	WEI FRASER Lakeshore Beverage
MATT MCCLELLAN Last Years Winner	KAREN HAWKINS Chicago Reader
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Francisco Bolanos grew up cooking alongside his grandmother in Madrid.  JEFF MARINI FOR CHICAGO READER

continued from 5

By Christmas Day he'd shifted into full tapas mode with a slim menu of a few sandwiches and bar snacks, including the classic potato omelet *tortilla espanola*, dates wrapped with bacon and stuffed with cheese, and slices of that salty ham with manchego and Iberian cheese.

People began dropping by with wine in numbers enough that Bolanos began setting out tapas on the counter after 3 PM (four for \$8), and going off menu with dishes such as *albondigas* in tomato sauce; *pisto manchego*, the Spanish expression of ratatouille, with a pair of eggs and shaved ham or chorizo ("old people's food," he calls it); and those patatas bravas, which he brings out free for first-timers.

Bolanos's transition from coffee shop to BYOB tapas bar is illuminating when you try

the actual coffee. Sourced from a Michigan roaster, it is the literal weak link at Little Madrid. But that's not why people are coming. Sunday brunches have gotten popular—and competitive—with neighborhood folks and Spanish expats vying for an order from the one and only pan of paella he makes. (I missed out on last week's *arroz negra* because I'd failed to reserve it early enough on Saturday by the time he sold out.)

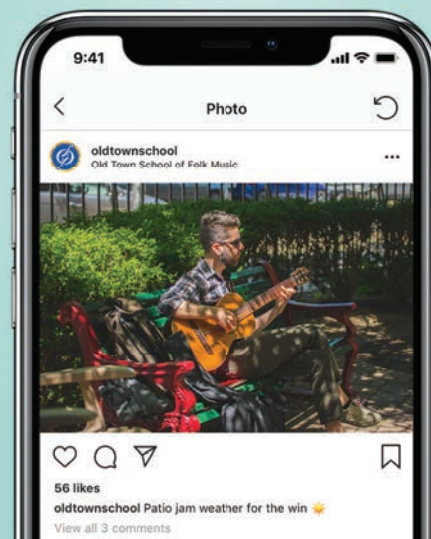
So far the problem isn't one of demand, but supply—and communication. His phone was recently stolen, so he's taking orders on Instagram. He's staying open late for a Valentine's Day dinner—gaspacho, sirloin in mushroom sauce, *jamon y queso*. And on February 27 Bolanos promises to make two pans of seafood paella when his mother comes to town to join him in the kitchen. That's just 20 orders. Or rather, 19, minus mine. 



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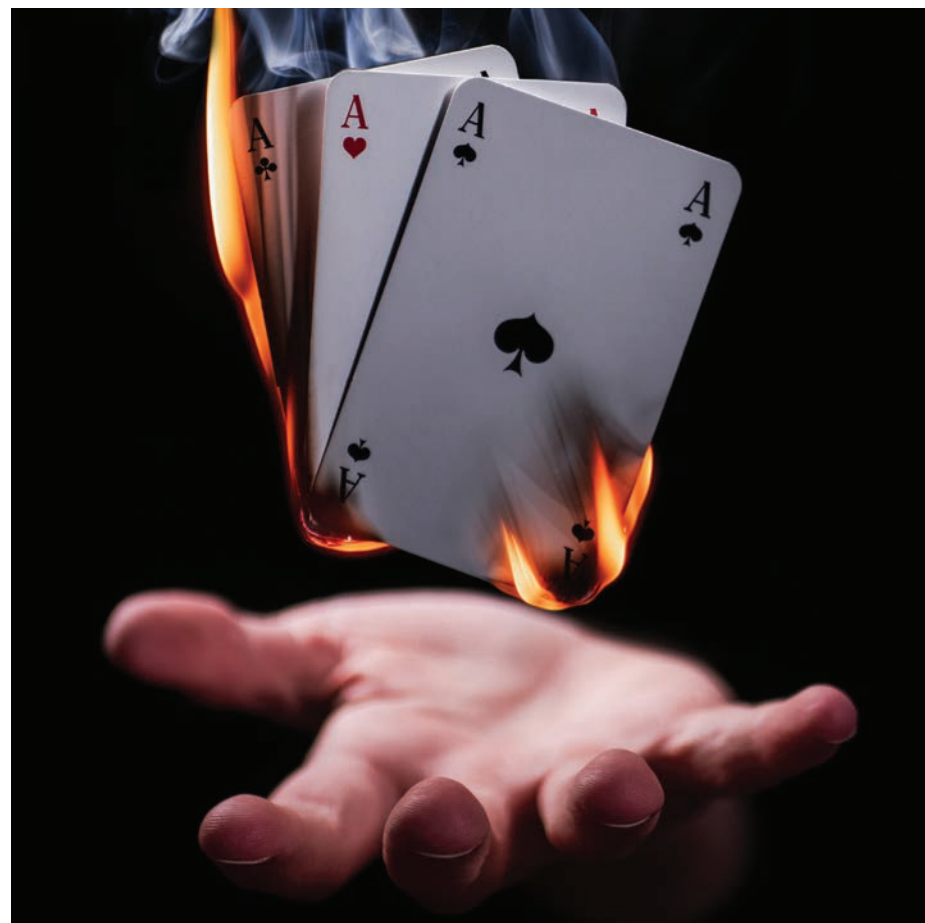
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NEWS & POLITICS



POLITICS

Chicago's three-card monte

Mayor Lightfoot's TIF "reform" does not tell you how much the scam costs.

By **BEN JORAVSKY**

Almost as if preordained, the first installment of my property tax bill arrived a few days before Mayor Lightfoot announced her TIF reform plan.

There's a correlation, as longtime readers know from past columns—not that you'd ever hear anyone from the city mention it.

No, the city's official policy regarding the property tax burden created by the tax increment financing program is that there is none.

This has been the policy since Mayor Daley invented Chicago's beastly spin on TIFs way

back in the 90s.

For the record, my annual tax bill is approaching \$13,000. If the upward trend continues, I'll be priced out of my house just like people in Woodlawn, Humboldt Park, Wicker Park, Lincoln Park, Lakeview, etc.

The powers that be in this city call such relocations progress. Yeah, it's always progress, so long as it's happening to someone else.

How much do the TIFs—with their annual take of hundreds of millions—add to my bill? I can't tell you because I don't know. I'm not

NEWS & POLITICS

Reforming the cost part of the TIF program is like “reforming” a game of three-card monte.

© JULIUS DROST / UNSPLASH

privity to the information I need to make such calculations. Those who have the info aren’t talking, presumably because they don’t want you to know.

I’ll get to that in a bit, but first, back to Mayor Lightfoot’s TIF reform.

There are three general problems with TIFs. There’s the equity issue—TIFs mostly benefit rich neighborhoods, even though the program is intended to help the poor.

There’s transparency—they’re part of a shadow budget, shrouded in secrecy. The city’s supposed to apply a rigorous “but-for” test to any application, as in, but for this TIF handout the project wouldn’t happen. But there’s generally no public scrutiny of these claims.

And then there’s the matter of cost. As I said, the TIFs jack up your property taxes. Think of them as an unknown surcharge that the city adds to your property tax bill without telling you that they’re adding it.

As soon as the mayor and aldermen create a TIF district, they freeze the amount the schools, parks, and county can take in property taxes from that district. To compensate for the money they’re not collecting from the TIF district, the schools and parks have to raise taxes on everyone else.

Mayor Lightfoot is proposing to “reform” the first two deficiencies by applying a TIF oversight committee to make sure the money’s more equitably distributed and to make a “more robust ‘but-for’ analysis” so “TIF funds are only used for projects that wouldn’t otherwise move forward,” as her press release puts it.

Good for you, Madame Mayor. I welcome any attempt to reform this beast and bring the shadow budget out of the shadows so we can see how much Roseland, one of the poorest neighborhoods, gets in contrast to Lincoln Yards, one of the richest.

Of course, I must point out that Mayor Rahm made similar TIF reform promises when he took office in 2011.

He put together a committee to study the matter. They prepared a report that made many of the same recommendations as Lightfoot. Then Rahm held a press conference congratulating himself for reforming TIFs and went right back to business as usual.

Within a year and a half of announcing his TIF reform, Mayor Rahm got the City Council to

approve more than \$50 million for the DePaul basketball arena and hotel in the rapidly gentrifying South Loop. The deal was approved on a voice vote that most aldermen didn’t know they were taking. So much for the but-for.

Before it was over, those South Loop TIF funds had been used to fix up Navy Pier, which isn’t even in a TIF, much less located in the South Loop. How that’s legal, I do not know. But Rahm got away with it.

Here’s hoping that Mayor Lightfoot is a little truer to her word about TIF reform than Mayor Rahm, though, as you can see, the bar is low.

As for “reforming” the cost part of the TIF by telling us, you know, how much they cost—don’t hold your breath.

Reforming this part of TIFs is like “reforming” a game of three-card monte. It can’t be done without defeating the whole purpose of the game. The point of the TIF scam is to mislead people into thinking they’re getting something for nothing. If you told them the truth, the scam would be busted.

One of Mayor Daley’s budget advisers explained it to me many years ago. He’d been reading my columns and wanted to meet the strange journalistic creature who was obsessed with this byzantine funding mechanism that heretofore only budget geeks cared about.

So, he reached out through a mutual friend. One rainy Saturday morning we had an off-the-record meeting at our friend’s house. She served coffee and cookies, and we spent the better part of two hours talking about TIFs.

Is that fun or what?

He explained that when it came to the budget, the mayor told his aides what he wanted to spend. Their job was to find the money to pay for it. TIFs were only a means to that end.

The larger problem, he explained, is that Chicagoans don’t realize the full cost of running the city. They’re like the people Jack Nicholson was raving about in *A Few Good Men*—they can’t handle the truth!

In this case, the truth they can’t handle is how much it costs to pay for police, fire, schools, street paving, pensions, etc.

I’ve come to grudgingly admit that the budget adviser had a point. The best way to get people to quietly and obediently pay their property taxes is to fool them into thinking they’re not paying them at all.

Ignorance is bliss, Chicago—enjoy your game of three-card monte. 

 @joravben



A series of political engagement events as curated by  **Persist List**
Keep the momentum

LWVIL 100th Anniversary Celebration

February 14
10am - 11:15am

The Congress Plaza Hotel & Convention Center
520 S. Michigan Ave.

Sunrise 2.0 Training

February 15
9am - 5pm
Weinberg/Newton Gallery
688 N. Milwaukee Ave.

Judges Matter!

February 15
1:30pm - 2:30pm
Conrad Sulzer Library
4455 North Lincoln Ave.

ACE February Meeting: Abolish the Electoral College

February 16
2:30pm - 4:30pm
Community Room,
1st Congregational
25 E. Benton
Naperville, IL

Border Wars: Inside Trump’s Assault on Immigration

February 17
5:30pm - 6:45pm
Ida Noyes Hall,
Third Floor Theater
1212 E. 59th St.

Activism Evening - Postcards, Texting, Phonebanking

February 17
6:30pm - 8:30pm

Unity Lutheran
Church of Berwyn
6720 31st St.
Berwyn, IL

Black History Scavenger Hunt

February 19
5:30pm - 7:30pm
Institute for
Nonviolence Chicago
819 North Leamington Ave.

Chicago Abolitionist Book Club Meet Up!

February 19
6pm - 7:30pm
Chicago Freedom School
719 S. State St.

Business in Sustainability

February 19
6pm - 7:30pm
WeWork
515 North State St.

Democratic Primary 3rd Congressional District Candidate Forum

February 20
7pm - 8pm
LTHS Performing
Arts Center
4900 Willow Springs Rd.
Western Springs, IL

Introduction to Systemic Racism Workshop

February 21
9am - 5pm
Lutheran School of
Theology at Chicago
1100 E. 55th St.

Brave Space Alliance Open House Mixer, with Co-Host HRC Chicago

February 21
6pm - 8pm
Brave Space Alliance
1515 East 52nd Place
Floor #3

Being a Stronger Ally: Trans/GNC Business Affirming Symposium

February 22
9am - 3pm
Chicago Waldorf School
5200 N. Ashland Ave.

Chicago Volunteer Expo 2020

February 23
10am - 4pm
Peggy Notebaert
Nature Museum
2430 North Cannon Drive

For more information of listed events please visit persistlist.org

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NEWS & POLITICS



"When I hear Beto on the phone I tell him that hearing him gives me strength," say Lourdes, pictured here with her husband Miguel. MICHELLE KANAAR

'Humans do not deserve to be in cages'

After ICE detained Jesus Alberto "Beto" Lopez Gutierrez, his family has banded together to challenge his deportation.

By IRENE ROMULO AND BORDERLESS MAGAZINE

Jesus Alberto "Beto" Lopez Gutierrez, 24, was on his way home from a camping trip with friends when their car was pulled over by police in Iowa. Officers then transferred him to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) custody. Since May 2019, Gutierrez has been held in immigration detention.

ICE has refused to release Gutierrez, despite qualifying for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), an immigration program that provides protection from deportation for some individuals brought to the U.S. as

children. With the help of his family, Gutierrez is fighting his deportation in order to remain in Chicago with them. He has filed a federal lawsuit against the agency for failing to review his DACA eligibility and a lawsuit against the local ICE office in Minnesota for his prolonged detention.

Undocumented immigration activists across the country have seen an increase in targeted immigration enforcement actions by the Trump administration. They believe these actions are designed to punish their political activism. Despite the threat of retaliation,

NEWS & POLITICS



"We need to have faith in what we are doing," says Miguel L. "But at the same time, we can't just pray."  MICHELLE KANAAR

Gutierrez's brother Miguel L. has been publicly leading the fight for his release.

Miguel and his parents, Miguel Sr. and Lourdes, sat down with *Borderless Magazine* to discuss why they are waging a public campaign against ICE and to share their story with others who have family members in detention.

"IN THE BEGINNING, BETO

was going to sign his voluntary departure. I explained to him how we fight deportations. I told him that we don't always win but at the same time that the struggle shows ICE that people are going to put up a fight. That they're not just going to let themselves be taken away from their families. I was not going to promise him something that I know is not sure. So he thought about it for some days and he said, *Yeah, let's give it a try.*" —MIGUEL L.

"OUR LIVES HAVE CHANGED

a lot [since Beto was detained]. Before, I used to play music all the time. Since our son has been absent, I feel like we are missing our joy. Sometimes I think that we will not be as complete or happy until he returns. That's what inspires me [to fight] because we miss him." —MIGUEL SR.

"YES, I GET [SCARED]. WHEN

we make calls, I wonder if [ICE] are watching us, if they are going to come here, too. Since he has been detained I feel like I live my life very tense, very worried. I know we have nothing to hide, and I don't know if it's just my nerves, but I know that anything can happen. We love our son. He's our child, and I think that a parent will go until the end, no matter what happens, for your children. They are our reason to live, and I know he's suffering being away from us and locked up. We're suffering too, but I think we'll be with him until the end." —LOURDES 

Read the full story "*The fight to release Beto*" at borderlessmag.org and chicagoreader.com.

Individuals who have family members in deportation proceedings can reach out to Organized Communities Against Deportations via Facebook or call the Illinois Family Support Hotline at 855-435-7693.

Irene Romulo is a cofounder of *Cicero Independiente*, a bilingual local news outlet for people living in Cicero, Illinois.

 @chi_irenita

POETRY CORNER

Somniloquy

By Mike Puican

Each morning my father disappeared like the moon.
He returned in time for prayers before bed.

The soul reaches for its wildness. Doubting
Thomas's hand reaches for his savior's wound.

Here is the priest rubbing oil into my forehead.
He blesses me: priest, prophet and king.

Now I am five and sitting in dirt. Now
I'm in the kitchen taking apart the toaster.

Then one day I ask myself: am I really the change—
driving twenty miles each weekday before dawn?

I hear a choir of angels as an elevator opens
to my father's nursing care floor.

Here is my dad teaching me to change a water pump.
He holds the water pump; I tighten the bolts.

The first chill of winter fills the garage. Yesterday,
I used a Sawzall to open a wall. I worked slowly

so nails didn't pop through the drywall. Today
at my window, I watch believers file into Sunday Mass.

I watch the snow fall straight down in this rented room.
When I wake he holds me.

Mike Puican's debut book of poetry, *Central Air*, will be released by Northwestern Press in August. He is a long-time board member of the Guild Literary Complex and teaches poetry to incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals at the Federal Metropolitan Correctional Center and St. Leonard's House.

A biweekly series curated by the Chicago Reader and sponsored by the Poetry Foundation. This week's poem is curated by poet Yvonne Zipter.

Free events at the Poetry Foundation

Open Door Series: Rashayla Marie Brown & Philip Jenks with their students
Highlighting Chicago's outstanding writing programs
Tuesday, February 18, 2020, 7:00 PM

Poetry off the Shelf: Major Jackson
Acclaimed poet and author of *The Absurd Man*
Thursday, February 20, 2020, 7:00 PM

Poetry off the Shelf: Christian Campbell
Winner of the Fenton Aldeburgh First Collection Prize
Tuesday, February 25, 2020, 7:00 PM

A.R. Ammons: Watercolors
Works of a prolific poet and painter
Exhibition open through April 30

Poetry Foundation
61 West Superior Street
poetryfoundation.org/events





BRIDAL BREAKUP

Gown girl

How do you cut the cord when you're surrounded by couples tying the knot?

By KAYLEN RALPH

It reached almost 100 degrees in Minnesota on the day that Erica and Adam got married. Frank cried. I did, too, but it was because I was happy.

I reached for his hand and he jumped in his seat. I scared him. After the ceremony, I asked Frank if he was crying because he was emotional, perhaps thinking about us getting married one day?

"No, that's not why I was crying," he said.

I stopped on the dirt path we were following to the reception. The air was humid and the ground felt like cake beneath our feet; the block of my suede heel sank into its sponge as beads of sweat chased each other down my back.

I waited for Frank to realize I had stopped walking.

"Do you still want to marry me one day?"

"Jesus Christ, Kaylen."

"Is that a yes . . . ?" I was wearing all white.

Exactly three weeks later, Frank broke up with me over FaceTime. It was a Saturday morning, and I'd propped my phone against a sturdy candle on the coffee table in our living room.

Wearing a sweater over my favorite nightie, I savored the comfort of our couch and held a mug that once held a bouquet of flowers he'd sent to work on my birthday.

Frank held his phone in front of his face while he spat dip juice into a Gatorade bottle and told me he was unhappy. His lip fat; his voice flat.

"I put ice cream in my coffee this morning," I said.

I needed him to know what was in my cup. It was like when I discovered the value a garlic press could lend to guacamole. Who else was I going to tell?

"Nice. Was it good?" he asked.

Sipping my drink, by now a curdled combination of oily caffeine and clotted cream, I was by no means in denial of our relationship's dissolution.

"I have to go to work," I said. We hung up and I dumped the remnants of my affogato in the kitchen sink.

Within an hour, I arrived at the bridal boutique where I was a stylist, having just been dumped by the boy I thought I was going to marry. After dating for five years, it was not an unsafe assumption.



Kaylen Ralph ■ MARZENA ABRAHAMIK

I found my coworkers in a circle at the center of a sales floor that was vacant of customers. It was one of those perfect Gold Coast mornings, and sunlight poured in through the boutique's second-floor windows. I wished it would rain.

"I have an announcement," I said.

It was too early in the day for me to have lost my keys to the store, and my hair was already up, so I wasn't in need of a ponytail holder. The girls were intrigued.

"Frank and I are done."

Their faces fell, but their eyes sparkled. In a setting where relationship success stories were our livelihood, this was definitely going to spice up the day. I had dressed up to tell people my news—I wore an asymmetrical, one-shouldered crop top over Frank's white button-down with a fitted pencil skirt. I planned to look the part of a well-adjusted, stylish woman while relaying the details of how my life was going up in flames.

Frank left for a business trip two weeks before the breakup, just a few days after the wedding in Minnesota. What was supposed to be a routine, five-day trip turned into weeks of him all but ignoring my texts and calls. The girls and I knew something was up, and I had left work the day before promising I'd have answers by the time I returned.

"Frank and I are done."

My delivery was crisp, but the words were chewy in my mouth. I swished the sounds around with my tongue and tried to determine, "Is it too salty? Undercooked? Please, tell me what I need."

My store is staffed by a rotating roster of women who range in age from 20 to 60 years old, and who mostly all check the "in a relation-

ship box" at the OB-GYN. My breakup officially made me a single woman employed by a brand that caters exclusively to the newly engaged, by default and design.

Franks and I moved to Chicago two years prior, and I started working at the bridal boutique almost immediately. As a self-imposed and societally sanctioned pressure to solidify our romantic history steadily crept in during our first year in the city, our underlying incompatibility emerged in step. We held our breath while our relationship treaded water. We had the perfunctory air any long-term couple perfects over the years: Is the dishwasher clean or dirty? How are we splitting time on Christmas Eve? Did you buy garbage bags? Are we having sex tonight?

But as I spent my days with a revolving door of brides-to-be, the professionalism of our interactions reinforced a healthy barrier between me and them—the engaged girls—that masked the more meaningful disconnect of my own relationship. They wanted to marry their partners, and I was getting mad at mine for putting olive oil in his hair when he ran out of pomade.

I'm good at my job. I have helped many women say yes to the dress. The journalist in me knows the right questions to ask, and my oldest-sister mentality makes it easy for me to convey that "I'll be the one in charge here today."

It wasn't until I had one foot stuck in the Minnesota mud, curls limp, back sweaty, that I snapped. We'd attended five weddings in a year and a half. I kept thinking ours would be next without pausing to consider whether that was even what I wanted.

"Frank and I are done," I told the girls at the

boutique.

Ana told me to step down from the chair I'd climbed to make my announcement and go sit in the gown gallery, so I did. Someone fed me a dry bagel, and I don't really remember the rest of that afternoon, the first day I began healing my heart in the most unlikely of places.

It was only a few days later that I stood behind my morning appointment as she looked at me in the three-way mirror.

"Are you married?" she asked.

"No, I'm not," I shot back. "And I'm going through a nasty breakup with the guy that was supposed to propose."

My brain returned to my body just in time for me to witness my meltdown. This was not the place. Frank was not my future. The bride was a woman my age who was just trying to make conversation. She was a bridechilla and I'd totally zapped her zen.

"No, I'm not," I said, with a regained calm, a tacitly implied chance for a redo—all we can really ask from each other and ourselves.

In the aftermath of my breakup, what had always felt like a benevolent, underlying "me versus them" dynamic of stylist versus client became suddenly personal. A bride-to-be's very presence in my store necessitated she have something I did not, something I assumed I should—and would—have by now.

My workplace surroundings could have served as a constant reminder of what I thought I'd lost. The revolving door never stopped spinning, and for awhile, neither did I.

But the world kept spinning, too. Shipment of new product arrived each day a little after 3 PM. We maintained our standing champagne order with Sofia Coppola, and I alphabetized order forms before locking up the store and

hopping in an Uber to meet my friends at the bar.

I packed up Frank's things, starting with the contents of the second bedroom that we'd made his office. It's my office now. I dropped notes in strangers' pockets, fell in (and out) of love approximately 24 times and went for long runs on the lakefront after work each night. My morning announcements at the boutique kept getting juicier.

I styled 365 days worth of brides and attended several weddings with my friends and my family. The passage of time, which was all I really needed, marked itself subtly—in the dip of a deeper neckline, the curve of a shortened train, and the evolution of my friends' own relationships. The ease with which I slept each night in my own apartment. Nothing changed, except for everything.

"Are you married?" the 24-year-old blonde from Texas asked me. She stepped into the center of the gown I held open for her in my hands, low to the ground.

She was in Chicago to shop for gowns with her mom and sisters over the holidays. I pulled the fitted, beaded gown up the length of her body. The zipper caught on its way up the showroom sample as she waited for my response.

"No, I'm not," I said, with a smile she couldn't see.

I knew where to apply the right amount of pressure to pull the zipper through its track of warped teeth. I put my hand on her shoulder.

"Are you ready to open your eyes?"

"Is this the dress?"

"Have you ever put a scoop of ice cream in your coffee?" ■

Twitter @kaylenralph



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RACHAL DUGGAN

BOOZE

Drown your sorrows

A Valentine's Day bar guide based on relationship status

By RIMA PARIKH

Valentine's Day can be a complicated time of year, especially if your relationship can't be defined in traditional terms. It's 2020: who is even "in a relationship?" It's not like you *want* to have anything in common with everyone in your high school graduating class, right?

V-Day is a holiday about packaging love. It's about love and making everything at the drug-store more expensive by putting hearts on it, in the hopes that being inundated with pink and red will activate your insecurities about whether you're doing your relationship (or lack thereof) correctly. It's great to not give in, but also, listen, some of us are predisposed to FOMO. And what better way to loosely celebrate a Hallmark holiday than to go to a bar? You can go alone or with friends, you still get to have plans, but the plans are so low-maintenance that you could cancel last minute to watch TV in pajamas sans guilt. Here's where to go based on your relationship status:

If you're recently single (and in a crisis):
Beauty Bar

Before you do something drastic (cut your own bangs, open a Kohl's credit card, buy a hamster, etc.), dance out your stress at Beauty Bar. They've got a manicure and martini deal, a disco ball, and, as of press time, no rule against bringing a weighted blanket. [1444 W. Chicago, thebeautybar.com/home-chicago](http://1444.W.Chicago,thebeautybar.com/home-chicago)

If you're recently single (and doing fine):
Mariano's bar

Breakups are hard, but you're doing OK! You're showering! Doing laundry! Talking to strangers' dogs in a baby voice! And yeah, actually, it is fine to indulge in a glass of wine at the Mariano's bar, just like your fellow Mariano's bar comrades: two middle-aged women both named Donna who are gossiping about a tertiary Donna, and a brooding divorcee with a salt-and-pepper beard and a heavy gaze that says, "I have to pick up my daughter from soccer practice later," eyes that, perhaps, really see you. You know what, maybe just get a bottle of wine to go. Find a location near you at marianos.com



If you're "dating" someone in an open relationship: *Cole's Bar*

Whether it's the emotional compartmentalizing or the constant blurring of boundaries, the fun never ends when you're hooking up with someone in an open relationship! Spend tonight at Cole's, a good dive bar with a disproportionate number of magicians willing and ready to explain deepfakes to you. *2338 N. Milwaukee, colesbarchicago.com*

If you kissed your "platonic" friend two months ago and you are NOT talking about it: *Berlin*

Maybe see a drag show and then dance the night away without making eye contact? Platonically? *954 W. Belmont, berlinchicago.com*

If you made "ironic" V-Day plans with someone from an app, but the only mutual interest you have is liking the *South Park* Facebook page in high school: *Marz Brewing*

In the words of my worst Tinder date, "I'm not much of a talker." Marz Brewing has good food and a ton of experimental beer choices

that you can pretend to know stuff about. If you run out of things to talk about, you can always default back to how cool their packaging art is. *3630 S. Iron, marz.beer*



✍ RACHAL DUGGAN

If you're casually hooking up with someone and it's super casual, you feel really casual because it's very casual, nothing not-casual about this, haha, ha: *Green Mill*

Every time you hang out with your casual hookup, you're never thinking, "What are

we?" even if you guys are casually spending every weekend together making pancakes and casually playing an emotionally charged board game, casually. Why not go to a historic bar that does NOT remind you of your history with your casual hookup, with whom you could not imagine ever not being casual??? Haha! Ha. *4802 N. Broadway, greenmilljazz.com*

If you're sleeping with your ex: *The Owl*

Yes, I'm unfairly assuming it's a bad idea, and, yes, I'm punishing you by telling you to go to a safe space for STDs to thrive without judgement. Going to the Owl could either get you two to resolve your issues in the name of survival OR stir a revelation that forces you to break up for real this time. *2521 N. Milwaukee, owlbarchicago.com*

If you're sleeping with your coworker: *Three Dots and a Dash*

No further questions here. This needs to be a stealth operation. Go to a dark bar with strong drinks in a part of town where you won't run into your friends and prepare for scintillating

conversation mainly focused on how annoying it is that Kevin from work taps on his desk too loud. *435 N. Clark, threedotschicago.com*

If you're sitting in a mall food court doing one of those face mash-ups of what you and your high school crush's baby would look like: *Spyners Pub*

Unfortunately, you've already been kicked out of Build-a-Bear Workshop for bringing vodka. But fear not! You can still commiserate at Spyners Pub. Some might say it's the perfect dive: free popcorn, cheap drinks, karaoke, the sweetest bartenders, and a cozy and nurturing environment? What is this, the Montessori of dive bars? *4623 N. Western*

If you're dating someone too young to remember 9/11: *Sluggers*

You're in your 30s and you're dating someone who "understands" TikTok? You're condemned to a terrible bar in Wrigley. Sorry! Rules are rules. *3540 N. Clark, sluggersbar.com* 📍

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Yana Kunichoff NICK BURT

DIY BREAKUP REMEDIES

Taking heartbreak seriously

A journalist turns her breakup into art and politics with a breakup zine.

By **MAYA DUKMASOVA**

No matter how cynical and anti-consumer culture you may be, Valentine's Day is often a bitch when you're not coupled up—especially so if you're going through a breakup. A couple of years ago investigative reporter (and sometimes *Reader* collaborator) Yana Kunichoff found herself at the end of a nine-year relationship. The breakup was an apocalypse in the way only ones that mean the end of a whole life and way of being can be. After a year of struggling through her feelings, she decided to make processing the breakup a political project and enlisted collaborators, including her roommate and partner in heart-

break, Kelly Viselman, to make a zine.

Why make a zine to deal with a breakup?

I'm a journalist, I very much experience the world by talking to people, taking information, and then writing it out in the world. That is my basic processing mechanism for reality. I was going through a really hard breakup of a relationship of nine years—a really long intense, beautiful relationship. I found myself doing what I would do with any article [I write]. I was googling, like, "how long will this heartbreak last? When will I feel better?"

As a fellow journalist recently going through a breakup I can relate!

I was reading research papers. I was like: "There must be some kind of empirical answer!" But I was not really finding anything. I was finding these terrible articles. All these photos of a woman sitting amongst plants alone. [The breakup] felt much rawer and much more intense than any of these things acknowledged so I was like: "What else can I do?" As a general approach to my own emotional space and emotional experience of a woman I kind of think in the frame of Elena Ferrante, Doris Lessing, bell hooks—the personal is political. In my own coming to this place of independence and openness with the people around me I was like, "This is not just a personal experience. This is a political awakening to a different way I want to be in the world, and a reckoning with my own emotional space." I had never done zines before. But the person I'm in a relationship with now came from a much more DIY, punk anarchist culture. And I was so interested in this creative idea as a way of processing. Zines have a radical political history and having other people be part of the zine was really big because a project

like this is not just like publishing my journal. I want there to be a space for people to come together around this issue and think creatively about "What are the artifacts of this really painful thing that you've gone through?"

So what's in this breakup zine? It doesn't exist yet, right?

It doesn't exist fully yet. It is a very long Google doc. I put in some of my own writing. I was reading a lot of poetry at the time and finding that that was better able to mediate the emotional place I was at. There's a list of song lyrics we felt spoke most clearly to some of the pain. Someone gave me a list of things that they have promised themselves they wanted to do before they started dating again. Then another list of the type of guys that they went on dates with before they met the person they ended up falling in love with. A friend of mine wants to submit some excerpts of letters between her and her partner when they were breaking up.

What do you hope people will take away from the zine?

To me [the breakup] was a rethinking of an entire history, and not to delegitimize or change it but to understand this new shattering reality in which I had to rethink my past and reset it in my mind. And that is like an insane psychological endeavor. It took a realigning of self.

Because it's an ego death.

Yeah, I think that's true. At its core, this zine is for people who have experienced this kind of heartache. It is a document of solidarity to people who might go through it, to people who are considering going through it, and to people who have gone through it. The other side of love is heartbreak. And taking love seriously means taking heartbreak seriously. *On Valentine's Day, Fri 2/14, Kunichoff is hosting a zine-making party. To learn more about the event or submit art and writing for the breakup zine, contact her at break.up.zine23@gmail.com.*

@mdoukmas



GET DUMPED

Beyond the heartbreak hotel

Four places where relationships sunk

By SALEM COLLO-JULIN

Let's face it, only a few of us have relationships that call for a complete stranger installing a plaque at the site where we had our first kiss a la Barack and Michelle's monument at 53rd and Dorchester, the former site of a Baskin-Robbins that they reportedly visited on their first date. But plenty of us can point directly to venues, restaurants, and perhaps even neighborhoods that are forever tainted in our minds by memories of love gone very wrong. Here are four Chicago spots that unfortunately resulted in heartbreak.

The Big Show

Musicians are creative, emotional creatures, and what better way to express their experience than delivering performances to the public infused with a spectrum of feelings: good, bad, and vengeful. The Replacements chose to give the audience the real deal on July 4, 1991, during their legendary "breakup" show in Grant Park during the Taste of Chicago. It was the last show of what was already announced as the Replacements' final tour, in the last years of a band that hadn't been getting along for a while. Shouting and arguing onstage during the last half of the show ended with the entire band handing over their instruments to roadies and walking off stage during the final number.

Swiping left in Lincoln Park Zoo

Lincoln Park Zoo's last male lion resident, Sahar, unfortunately passed away last September, but he was a popular attraction during his stay in Chicago. Sahar was originally brought to Lincoln Park from the Bronx Zoo in 2012 to serve in part as a younger male companion to the zoo's then 16-year-old lioness Myra. After Myra died in 2014, Sahar needed a friend and Lincoln Park Zoo brought two two-year-old female lions from Oregon, Zalika and Kamali, to attempt socialization. Sahar, whether still missing Myra or just being a stubborn male, wasn't having it. As the *Chicago Tribune* reported in 2015, "The clever boy plopped down right in front of the doorway where the new cats . . . would ideally enter the outdoor exhibit and start engaging with him. But he is foiling the

plan, blocking their potential path while enjoying the shade and happily flicking his tail."

Walking through Wicker Park

Nelson Algren's biographers know for sure that he lived at 1958 W. Evergreen for most of the 1950s, but we're not sure exactly where he might have been when he received a letter from writer Simone de Beauvoir, putting an end to their deepening long-distance affair. It's readable in *Hell Hath No Fury*, an anthology of women's letters edited by Anna Holmes. Algren had grown weary of the distance between them and acted distant during de Beauvoir's visit, which resulted in her painful decision to end the romance. She writes with heartbreaking honesty, "As for me, it is baffling to say so and I feel ashamed, but it is the only true truth: I just love as much as I did when I landed into your disappointed arms, that means with my whole self and all my dirty heart; I cannot do less."

The Wiener's Circle

Dawn doesn't want me to tell you her real name, but I was present for this incident (roughly 20 years ago) and can concur: breaking up with someone sometimes takes a village. We'll call Dawn's ex-boyfriend Rahm. Rahm was a cad from the get-go, and insisted that Dawn pay for most of their outings as well as wear only outfits that he had chosen. For the record, Rahm was not a professional stylist. When Dawn finally found her self-esteem, she decided to break up with Rahm at the Wiener's Circle, the infamous hot dog stand at Wrightwood and Clark. Dawn insisted upon doing this at 7 PM on a Friday so we could all get food afterward and miss the loudmouth crowd, but a small group of Chads overheard her telling Rahm that she was done. A debate over Dawn's worthiness as a girlfriend was ignited, resulting in one of the employees of the restaurant coming out to the picnic benches and shouting at everyone, "She dumped your white ass; get the fuck out!" 

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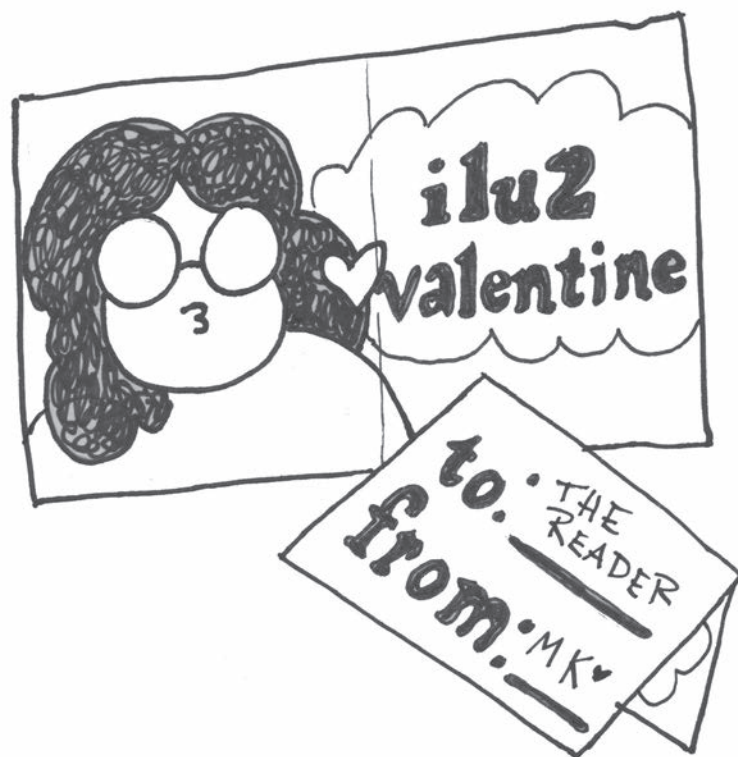
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SINGLE RITUALS

Be mine, Valentine

Single people can celebrate February 14, too!

By MEGAN KIRBY

When I tell people Valentine's Day is my favorite holiday, they expect me to be a hopeless romantic, or to say some bullshit like, "I just love my friends so much!" No. I love Valentine's Day because I love myself. I think everyone should be a little more self-obsessed, and Valentine's Day offers the perfect opportunity to celebrate that obsession. But I didn't always feel this way.

In 2009, as a chronically single college freshman, I had a Valentine's Day date with fanfiction.net. I told myself I was feeling pathetic and lonely, because that's how you're supposed to feel on Singles Awareness Day,

right? But as I clicked on the next Remus/Sirius fic in the queue and took a sip of my cafeteria Diet Coke, I realized that actually this was *exactly* what I wanted to be doing.

I only felt sorry for myself because that's the way the holiday had always been presented to me. Suddenly that cultural narrative didn't make sense. I grew up watching shows and reading books that told me I was incomplete if I wasn't in love with someone. I thought loving myself too much was indulgent or narcissistic. But those two things aren't the same thing at all.

I asked myself: What would switch Valen-

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✍ MEGAN KIRBY

tine's Day into something that made me feel good, instead of something that filled me with dread? So I ordered a Conor Oberst T-shirt on the Internet (peak 2009 energy). A simple shift—but one that would change the holiday for the rest of my life.

A decade later, I adhere to two strict Valentine's rules. Number one: I buy myself a luxurious coffee. I don't hold back. Quad shot? Raspberry syrup? Extra whip? Caramel drizzle? Why not! Happy Valentine's Day, baby girl! Number two: I order myself a gift on the Internet. I'm not allowed to decide until the day of. It must be something I wouldn't let myself buy any other day of the year. No responsible purchases! (Crock-pots or vacuums are not allowed.)

Buying gifts for myself is the best. I am never disappointed. I don't need a gift receipt. And these items stay spread through my apartment like totems—reminders that I can treat myself with the same active kindness I'd show anyone I love. The novelty shot glasses from 2013. The out-of-print Lynda Barry book

from 2015. A photo from the trip to Seattle I booked in 2018. The bizarre bootleg Moomin T-shirt I bought last year, which seems to be Finnish translated to Japanese translated to English; every time I pull it on, I think, *Aw, what a nice gift this was.*

At the same time, I don't want to use Valentine's Day to side-eye romance. Falling for someone is fun as hell! But whether or not I'm smooching a cutie, I am always my own sweetheart. And yeah, that's cheesy, but there's a real power in it, too. Has anyone ever gotten any real satisfaction from ironic detachment?

Loving myself is a long-term commitment: to make my bed and buy Trader Joe's flowers and call myself "darling" and throw out expired yogurt and pay an unbelievable fee for my marketplace health insurance. Sometimes it's glamorous, but mostly it's boring. It's something I do every single day. And it's nice to pause and really celebrate that.

So every February 14, I wake up in a good mood, and I think about the importance of building rituals that fill my days with joy. Because I have a third, unspoken rule of Valentine's Day: I treat myself with extraordinary kindness.

This Friday, I'll wake up and decide where to get my decadent coffee. I'm not sure what I'll do from there. Maybe I'll draw comics in a cafe, or journal by the river. I'll decipher what I most want, and then I'll do it. In the evening I'll put on sweatpants and click around the Internet for a token of my affection. I'll know it when I see it. Then maybe I'll order takeout or go to a drag show or crash a karaoke party or just drink a Diet Coke in the bathtub. Whatever happens, I know I'll have a dreamy day all on my own. 🛒

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Josh and
Sheri
Flanders
COURTESY
JOSH
FLANDERS

They found love in a Matches place

Two love stories that started on the pages of the *Reader*

After years of reading the women-seeking-women *Reader* Matches ads and never seeing any I felt called to respond to, I just could not get hers out of my mind: “kick-boxing babe,” “Xena-lover,” “giver of tender back rubs,” “looking for articulate romance with a queer cutie.” She didn’t mention a size or shape of body that she was looking for. She didn’t talk about anything I found boring or stupid. The ad stuck with me all week, but I didn’t act. I was fat. I had almost zero dating experience. Calling a stranger was SCARY.

My roommate locked me in my room on the last night that the ad’s voice mail was active and refused to let me out until I left a message. So after wasting hours alone in my room, I finally left a voice message: “I’m fat and swear like a sailor,” “I grew tomatoes for the first time this year,” “I’m an art student.”

I could not believe it when she called me back! I was so nervous when the phone rang, but we had a long and easy conversation touching on things like the fact that her brother and I had the same pinup girl mobile, why marriage is stupid, and all the ways that monogamy is fraught. Then we set a time to meet in person the next week for our first date.

That was in October 1998. She gave me a tender kiss as I was getting out of her car. I gave her a tiny box of the tomatoes I grew in my garden. Twenty-one years later, we have a ten-year-old kid, a solid, loving relationship, and a yard with too much shade to grow tomatoes. —**Searah Deysach**

Josh: We were both recent divorcees looking for love.

Sheri: A friend asked me to help her write a personal ad in the *Reader*, and I decided to create one for myself too.

J: This was back in the days when online dating was shameful. I complimented her on her book choices, except for Ayn Rand.

S: Rand is great dark fiction. I waited a month until Christmas to respond.

J: After some e-mails back and forth, we talked on the phone and met for pizza.

S: I was training for the marathon and had just run ten miles, so I almost cancelled.

J: We both had friends call us as backup plans to bail just in case things went south.

S: Or in case he was a psychopath. We immediately connected on books, cats, and all things nerdy. It was love at first sight.

J: After dinner we went to the Green Dolphin ballroom with friends. The band started playing “September” by Earth, Wind, and Fire.

S: He asked me to dance and that sealed the deal. The conversation turned to architecture. I was curious about the Baha’i Temple.

J: My friends suggested we go on a tour. Our second date was set for the next morning!

S: Before the tour he took me to breakfast at Walker Brothers for pancakes. We started hanging out every day and the rest is history!

J: Fast-forward six years to our wedding.

S: Fast-forward again to 2019 when we both had articles published in the *Reader* side-by-side!

J: That’s what I call a full-circle *Reader* Romance! —**Josh and Sheri Flanders**

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READER *matches*

Happy to share this planet with you Hey Jean, distance may be the way of the day as you care for family, but we're still on the same planet, even if a few hundred miles away. Thanks for being there for 25+ years! Twitter: @TracyBaimWCMG

Your Friendly, Neighborhood Ginger-Enthusiast & Cat-Lover Ahoy-hoy. I'm a guy who talks about von Trier & Bowie as easily as Wonder Woman & final girls. More importantly, I'm a guy who listens. I know the horrors of r/Relationships and, madam, I won't lead you there. I also wanna know about you: What do you wish more people would ask? calcitrant youth@gmail.com

Yearlong Volunteer Seeks Love Fun Night and Free Dinner Bitchy, but in a funny way. Believe in Oxford Comma always, always, and forever. I live in an old convent with nine roommates who make no salary. Side note: we're looking for a community sugar daddy. sarahsvalentinesdaymiracle@gmail.com Instagram: @americancrust

Let's do the Karlton You keep me on my toes. You lift me above all boats. You make me laugh. You make me cry. You also piss me off, but what can I say you're the apple of my eye. You're a hunk. I'm a dime. Together we're as cute as apple pie. Let's get back together cuz I miss ya in my life. <3 Instagram: @yazmoody

Honey Money All my life I've been searching, well the search is over. Love is hard and has its ups and downs. But we're working on things to turn those frowns upside down. You're the cutest girl in the world, even cuter than bunnies. I love you, you're my world my sweet honey money. yeakarlton90@gmail.com Instagram: @sir_chiefton

Adventure is Out There (29m) Theater nerd with a passion for creating adventures. Have a day free? Let's go to the Bahai'i temple and walk around, hit up the Chicago Magic Lounge, or take a trail walk through a state park (when it's warmer). Also a big fan of drinking coffee and pointing out cute dogs. Instagram: @ImCharlieBaker

Souvenir Sweethearts Do you ever find yourself spending more time perusing the museum gift shop than the exhibits themselves? I'm looking for a man to join me on my quest to find the Ultimate Souvenir. We can hold hands amongst the overpriced coffee mugs and novelty pencil sharpeners. giftshopgal773@gmail.com

Looking for Mr/Ms/Mx Right (Now, & In My Neighborhood) Are you tired of an actual relationship? Me too. Let's connect, have some drinks & see what casual dating is all about. I'm a 50yr old tall trans queer woman. Interested in a human being of any (or no) gender, if you're a boy, it'd be nice if you're taller than me. -Logan Square trish_matches@yahoo.com

Be Part of A Kinda Reality Dating Show for 45+ Recorded in River North Studio Are you 45+ and currently or open to being back in the dating scene.... an interesting personality -whose dating life often has unusual results ? If you're open to sharing your story on social and digital platforms and you'd like to be part of a new dating show -Contact Us roger@zacuto.com Instagram: @lifebeginsat47 Twitter: @lifebeginsat47

Man Seeking Woman: The Movie
How we think we met:
(ext. Old Style sign hanging on corner)
(int. dive bar)
Me: One Malort please.
You: One Malort please.
Us: Jinx.
(you blush as Wilco plays)
Me: May I kiss you?
You: I don't know, may you?
(we kiss)
Joe Swanberg: Cut!

How we actually met:
The Chicago Reader
312-772-5282

Mustard Man We connected over our love for mustard while both wine-drunk in the mustard section at the Fullerton Whole Foods. I told you I couldn't justify spending \$7 on a beer & honey mustard. You told me I should pour Miller Lite into the \$2 honey mustard. I'm still laughing at that. mustardmanmatch@gmail.com Twitter: @fernandezrachel

SPARKLE MOTION Inquisitive, "intimidating," ingenious, 34 - 5'8" Asian time traveler (she/her) bored of the same old. Are you a cool headed, ambitious, financially stable & available (in all respects) man ready for witty barbs, spontaneous quests, honest debates to kick us out of this loop? iheartsandy312@gmail.com Instagram: @heysandylee

Spinning Through The Town 29 F seeking M to take a chance on a love that burns hot enough to last.
Oh I wanna dance with somebody
I wanna go out to eat with somebody
Yeah I want to take pants off somebody
Off somebody who loves me
DONT'CHA WANNA DANCE?!
SAY YOU WANNA DANCE!!
DONT'CHA WANNA DANCE?!"
hahaland29@gmail.com
Instagram: @have_youmetjess

How fun is this??? Remember Reader Personals being the place to get lost in romance? How fun it was to read those ads and secretly hope one was meant for you? If so, you're old enough to keep reading this ad. Let's meet up for coffee in the Loop and discuss Ben Joravsky's latest column. fuzzymatches01@gmail.com

Great guy looking for great girl I am a very affectionate person who likes holding hands and cuddling. I am very spontaneous and enjoy many forms of entertainment including watching many movies (in a theater mostly), concerts of any genre and plays, etc. I love nature and traveling as much as possible. 317-348-0197

God willing, we'll all meet again in Spaceballs 2: The Search for More Money 33, woman, Jesus-follower who loves film and thinks the world would be in trouble without jazz. Laughs loud and often, mostly in museums. Seeking man 28-40 for LTR. You: Jesus-follower who's curious about the world and ppl's stories. Travel often and willing to share your sushi. granddemy@gmail.com

We can stay up all night looking at the criterion collection and talking CS Lewis Ray, 31
Quiet, Wise, Deceptively Silly, Weirdly Deep, Refreshingly Devout, Peculiarly Pious...Smells Good.....Has Nice Teeth.
Likes accents.....always thought it be cool to date someone from a different culture. IDK...too much I Love Lucy I guess.
aliceone11@yahoo.com
Twitter: @mrchicago12

I'm just an animal looking for a home Sweet & salty single lady, 30, seeking man with sharp wit and strong hands. Let's debate whether Silver Springs should have been on Rumours, or make out in the back of Music Box. If it goes well, I'll make you dinner while you read Das Kapital. (I look great in an apron.) Text: 206-414-9627

Getting stuck in the middle seat next to you was the best flight of my life. 40, woman, Jesus-loving Christian who loves to travel, history, sports, and dancing. I laugh often, because life is short. Seeking man, 35-47 for LTR. You: Jesus-loving Christian who travels and wants to unlock their inner nerd while sharing life's adventures and ice cream. ctrt1108@gmail.com

Live, Laugh, and Love Fully Attractive bi-racial SF, 56 y.o. 5'8", 155lbs. seeking SBM, 55-60 y.o., 6'0"- 6'5" for friendship and possibly more I enjoy a good conversation, working out, outdoors, cooking, reading,

Black Ensemble Theater, and our Lakefront, PBS programs, old TV shows, all types of music
312-291-1366

Light my fire; be my match. Hi! Long time reader of the Reader first time writer of the personal ad. I am female, just turned 38. Open to all genders. I like creating, thinking, exploring. My interests and accomplishments are as varied as the ice cream flavors at Jeni's. I look forward to hearing from you! 773-245-6727

A "cunning, pliable, chestnut-haired sunfish" girl seeks a nice boy Unpopular opinion but Parks & Rec is better than The Office. Maybe you agree, maybe you don't. Lucky for you, I have other interests, like searching for the best ramen spot, dancing, listening to podcasts & finding good happy hour deals. Let's meet up! PS I'm 24 if that matters jac.g2299@gmail.com

It's Genie's Birthday! Happy Valentines Day and Happy Birthday to Genie, my hilarious, talented, smart, and wonderful mom. Mama Say Mama Sa Mamacusa!

Instagram: @holloholo

INTENSE ETHEREAL WHOOSHING SM 32 6' dutch, cyclist, nerdy weirdo seeking similarly strange woman for LSD bike rides, digital dungeon crawls, and matinee movies. Let's rock! 773-245-3978

Is It You? Want SDWWM 63-76 ed/profi fun humorous giving 64 SWJPF grad ed. in Lincoln Park- no children, no pets. Enjoy pickleball, cubs, plays, movies, dining, travel, current events, lectures, fashion, investing, biking etc slender with gorgeous green eyes blond hair- fin stable. Want SDWWM 63-76 ed/prof gaylesusan3@gmail.com

Vivacious, sparkly, #stacked 33F Seeking gainfully employed, light-hearted, cultured, centered, athletic, tall/dark/handsome woke adult male, with varied interests who knows how to plan dates. sarachicago2020@gmail.com

Let's have some fun and laughter! Life is good and I am looking for a guy who enjoys fun, laughter, music and cultural events. For me it doesn't get much better than that. Let's connect and see what happens. Nothing ventured nothing gained. Opened to friendship and possibly romance. Seize the moment. Coolgalconnect@gmail.com

sexy senior searcher Although there's some snow on the roof, this active 60+ still has a fire down below...seeking a lady who enjoys life. Attitude important...appearance not. windy_city_lover@yahoo.com

Hello? Is It Me You're Looking For? (And Other Cheesy Jokes) Library science student, roller derby skater, and performer seeking women/non-binary folk to adventure and laugh with. Interests include skating, hiking, hanging out at the GP Conservatory, art-ing, cooking, and finding new hobbies to take on. 312-772-6129 Twitter: @lisadubs13 Instagram: @isaintheevening

ARTS & CULTURE

Things to do

COMEDY

The Second Annual Davefest

Stand-up Marty DeRosa hosts this fundraiser for the David Carl Guastella Scholarship Foundation featuring comedy from Blake Burkhart, Cameron Gillette, Nate Burrows, and more plus music by Natalie Grace Alford and Sammy Arechar. [Sun 2/16, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western, emptybottle.com, \\$10.](#)

DANCE

The Times Are Racing

The Joffrey Ballet presents a mixed-repertory program of five works by contemporary choreographers, including the Chicago premiere of Justin Peck's 2017 ballet for which the program is named. [Through 2/23: Wed 7:30 PM, Thu-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 2 and 7:30 PM, Sun 2 PM; no performance Thu 2/13 or Wed 2/19, Auditorium Theatre, 50 E. Ida B. Wells, joffrey.org, \\$35-\\$197.](#)

LIT

Forever and Ever Again release

Love Man: *Forever and Ever Again* is a collection of comics and illustrations from 2015-2020. The release party includes a mini-exhibition by Ben Marcus and David Krueger. [Thu 2/13, 6-8 PM, Arts of Life, 2010 W. Carroll, artsoflife.org. FREE](#)

Angela Kenyatta

The author shares her knowledge of journaling and writing during a workshop at the library for Black History Month. [Sat 2/15, 2 PM, Sulzer Regional Library, 4455 N. Lincoln, chipublib.org. FREE](#)

VALENTINE'S DAY

Anti-Valentine's Day

This free event is celebrating National Condom Week and has partnered with sexual health organizations to provide free condoms and sexual health education to teenagers. There will be music, dancing, crafts, pizza, cheese, games, and, of course, condoms. [Fri 2/14, 6-9 PM, National Museum of Mexican Art, 1852 W. 19th, nationalmuseumofmexicanart.org. FREE](#)

Galentine's Day Market

In support of the Chicago Period Project, Fox Club and Mickey Alice Kwapis will be featuring more than a dozen artists for a shopping experience. Pad and tampon donations will be collected at the door. Free but RSVP is suggested. [Thu 2/13, 6-11 PM, Emporium Arcade Bar, 2363 N. Milwaukee, mickeyalicekwapis.com. FREE](#)

Mortified: Doomed Valentine's Show

Mortified features everyday people reading aloud from their most embarrassing teenage diary entries, love letters, poems, etc. [Fri 2/14, 8 PM, Sleeping Village, 3734 W. Belmont, sleeping-village.com, \\$23, \\$20 in advance.](#)

Odd Pleasures: A Queer Valentine's Day Event

This queer variety show, hosted by Auntie Chan, includes live ASMR, drag, comedy, and short films. [Fri 2/14, 6-9 PM, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, 220 E. Chicago, mcachicago.org, \\$10, \\$8 students.](#)

VISUAL ARTS

"The landscape reels back"

This two-person event features, curator, arts organizer, and Chicago artist Alexis Brocchi, who looks at how to search for information through nontraditional methods, and Tracie Hayes, an artist and ecologist. [Sun 2/16, 4-7 PM, Roman Susan, 1224 W. Loyola, romansusan.org. FREE](#)

"To Hold Space"

Bonny Nahmias has her first solo exhibition where she presents a project that she began in 2017. Stretching a tin can telephone over areas that are broken by geography, modernity, and politics, she has surpassed barriers and blockades. The project is accompanied by a book, *The Orchestra Of Space Holders*. [Opening reception is Fri 2/14, 6-10 PM. 2/14-2/28, Ground Level Platform, 2001 S. Halsted, groundlevelplatform.org. FREE](#)

"Images of My Experience"

Havana born artist Eduin Fraga exhibits his work with charcoal, mixed media, and collage. [Opening reception Thu 2/13, 4-6 PM. 2/13-3/18, daily 8 AM-midnight, Dittmar Gallery, 1999 Campus Drive, Evanston, norris.northwestern.edu/recreation/dittmar. FREE](#)

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Joffrey Company Artists Dylan Gutierrez and Jeraldine Mendoza. Photo by Cheryl Mann.

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The Boys in the Band MICHAEL BROSILOW

REVIEW

The boys are back in town

Windy City Playhouse turns a landmark of gay theater into an emotionally immersive experience.

By **ALBERT WILLIAMS**

The *Boys in the Band* is a groundbreaking work in American theater history. Windy City Playhouse's superb new production reveals Mart Crowley's 1968 drama also to be a durable emotional powerhouse, as potent and poignant today as ever.

Though not the first "gay play" in American theater, this off-Broadway milestone—about a group of gay men at a transformative birthday party—was the first gay "crossover" hit. For the first time, gays were the "insiders" whose world is disrupted by a (maybe) heterosexual misfit who is harassed and humiliated by the homosexual majority. It was "turnabout time," and nobody had ever seen anything like it on-stage—or onscreen, when a Hollywood movie starring the entire original cast was released in 1970. After paving the way for Harvey Fierstein's *Torch Song Trilogy* and Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*, *The Boys in the Band* finally

reached Broadway in 2018; Windy City Playhouse employs the Tony Award-winning revival's trimmed-down one-act edition of what was originally a two-act script. (A film adaptation of Joe Mantello's Broadway production will run on Netflix later this year.)

Set on a Saturday night in April of '68 (Easter/Passover weekend, perhaps?), the story takes place in the New York City apartment of Michael (Jackson Evans), a 30-something southern Catholic and an alcoholic in fragile recovery, who is hosting a gathering for pot-smoking frenemy Harold (Sam Bell-Gurwitz), a self-described "32-year-old pockmarked Jew fairy" (and perhaps Michael's former lover). The invitees include bookish Long Islander Donald (Jordan Dell Harris), who visits the city on weekends to see his psychiatrist and cruise the baths, as well as promiscuous barfly Larry (James Lee) and schoolteacher

Hank (Ryan Reilly), lovers whose arrangement is endangered by Hank's insistence on a monogamous relationship—like the heterosexual marriage Hank recently abandoned when he could no longer deny his homosexuality.

Also on the guest list are nelly queen Emory (William Marquez) and African American Bernard (Denzel Tsopnang), outsiders even within a predominantly white male bourgeois subculture grounded in butch/femme role-playing. In this production (as in the 2018 Broadway revival), Emory is also Latinx, which intensifies the pair's marginalized status. Joining in the "fun" is Cowboy (Kyle Patrick), a \$20-a-night male prostitute whom Emory has hired to be Harold's birthday present. Possessed of what Harold describes as "unnatural natural beauty," the handsome hustler is an object of both dehumanizing lust and mean-spirited mockery for his presumed stupidity. And then there's Alan

(Christian Edwin Cook), a supposedly straight preppy lawyer and Michael's former Georgetown University roommate, whose uninvited intrusion triggers an ugly—but eventually cathartic—evening of verbal (and in one case physical) violence, as the "boys" put aside their campy quips and bitchy banter to drunkenly confront their most vulnerable and painful memories, secrets, and fears.

Though recalling Edward Albee's 1962 *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*—another orgy of boozy emotional bloodletting—*The Boys in the Band* stands on its own thanks to the complex, ambiguous emotional dynamics among characters whose dense histories are occasionally explained but more often obliquely suggested. (Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming*, which ran on Broadway the year before Crowley's play opened, is clearly an influence.) Director Carl Menninger's intimate, immersive environmental staging illuminates the piece as a psychological mystery as well as a study of 1960s gay social dynamics. Designers William Boles (set) and Erik S. Barry (lighting) have transformed the sprawling space into the lushly colored living room/dining room/kitchen of Michael's apartment—a duplex in the tony Turtle Bay neighborhood of Manhattan's east midtown area. Some of the audience—only 40 people per performance—sit around the edges of the action; others are seated right in the middle of it, on a sunken rectangular couch. As the cast, all excellent, move around and among the viewers, Menninger charts the characters' shifting alliances via their changing spatial relationships.

Marquez and Tsopnang are particularly gripping as Emory and Bernard, with their back-to-back monologues about long-past but never-forgotten teenage crushes on white boys who could never return—or admit to sharing—their young love. It's easy to imagine these two participating in the Stonewall Rebellion a year after this story takes place, when queers of color fought back against police harassment and the social oppression it was meant to enforce. And it's possible to imagine these characters, all of whom take tentative steps toward personal liberation over the course of the evening, standing together as allies and caregivers in the AIDS crisis destined to unfold a decade later—an epidemic that, in real life, claimed the lives of almost half of the play's original cast.

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Madama Butterfly  TODD ROSENBERG

REVIEW

Butterfly's bad date

Puccini's classic, in revival at Lyric, makes the case for anti-colonialism.

By DEANNA ISAACS

A Letter from Butterfly
Dear *Chicago Reader*:

It has come to my attention that you're collecting the best bad date stories for your annual anti-Valentine's Day issue. I am here-with submitting my own. In my always-humble opinion, it will be very hard to top. Created by Italian composer Giacomo Puccini with a couple of his librettist pals, and based on an English play by another guy (David Belasco), it is set in Nagasaki, Japan, around 1904, which is also the year it premiered as an opera, in Milan. Puccini had never been to Japan, and the Milanese audience hated it, but I'm getting ahead of myself.

It won't surprise you to learn that my bad

date had been arranged. Actually, purchased. After my father's demise at his own hand (the honorable death of seppuku), my once-wealthy family had fallen into poverty. I was struggling to support myself as a geisha when a marriage broker approached my mother with an enticing offer. A dashing American naval officer, Lt. Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton, wanted to wed me and was willing to pay for the privilege. Dazzled by visions of our future together in America and deeply smitten, I converted to Christianity and married the lout. When my family learned of the conversion, they immediately renounced me. Did I mention that I was 15?

All was bliss until B.F. shipped out a few

THEATER



Madama Butterfly 📸 TODD ROSENBERG

months later, promising to return when “the robins nest” and unaware that I was pregnant. For three long years I waited, positive that he would be true to his word. Imagine my shock when he did return, with an American wife in tow, demanding that I hand over my beloved child to be raised in America as their son. Heartbroken, I seized my father’s knife and followed his example. Or at least, so says Puccini.

RR MADAMA BUTTERFLY
Through 3/8: Mon 2/17 and 2/24, 7 PM;
Wed-Thu 3/4-3/5, 2 PM; Fri 2/14 and 2/21, 7 PM;
Sat 2/29 and 3/7, 7:30 PM; Sun 3/8, 2 PM,
Lyric Opera, 20 N. Wacker, 312-827-5600,
lyricopera.org, \$49-\$299.

After a rough opening and a revision, this version of my tragic romance—buoyed by a truly ravishing score—became one of the 20th century’s favorite tearjerkers. You can see it right now at Lyric Opera, in a revival of a production by Michael Grandage staged there six years ago, with an able new cast

headed by soprano Ana María Martínez and tenor Brian Jagde as myself and Pinkerton, under Louisa Muller’s direction, with Henrik Nánási conducting. (On March 4 and 7, we’ll be played by Lianna Haroutounian and Brandon Jovanovich.)

Recently, however, folks have noticed that its archaic treatment of Japanese culture is ignorant; its casting, like this review, has been guilty of blatant appropriation; its touching love story is a #MeToo pedophilia nightmare. To which, I would only add that Pinkerton, that dirtbag, is an intentional symbol of American imperialism, and I, as conceived by Puccini, am honor incarnate. As University of Chicago professor Martha Nussbaum notes in her defensive program essay, whatever its other faults, Puccini wrote “a profoundly anti-American and anti-colonialist opera.” What could be more contemporary?

Sincerely,
Cio-Cio-San 📧

🐦 @Deannsaacs

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THEATER

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RR Games people play
Elaine May's *Adaptation* gets a rare revival.

The Boys in the Band at Windy City Playhouse isn't the only 1960s counterculture show in town. Theatre Above the Law's current staging of Elaine May's 1969 one-act *Adaptation* (an off-Broadway hit in its original run, but seldom seen these days) offers up a giddy and retro exploration of one man's voyage through the game of life. The story is structured as an actual game show, where the Contestant (David Hartley) moves from birth to death through various challenges (familial, academic, professional, romantic, existential) with the help of a Game Master and an ensemble of three actors playing all the supporting roles.

It's a bit like Chutes and Ladders crossed with the mid-century American male resentments and neuroses anatomized by Philip Roth, with a dash of Harry Chapin's "Cat's in the Cradle." Only of course, since it's May, it's much funnier than all of those elements.

Some of the topical references (SNCC, for example) feel dated. But Tony Lawry's smartly paced production in the tiny Jarvis Square Theater, where set designer Charlotte Lastra's board-game squares fill the stage floor with roadblocks such as "extramarital affair" and "social infraction," provides steady laughs over the 60-minute run time. As the Game Master, sixth-grader Delilah Lane is a deadpan delight, handing over cards of opportunity and fate to Hartley's Contestant as he half-examines his life before resorting to the gospel of "OAM": organization, administration, and management. Of course, the outcome of the game is predestined. But May's gimlet-eyed view on how we play it still carries some heft. —**KERRY REID** *ADAPTATION* Through 3/8: Thu 7:30 PM, Fri-Sat 8 PM, Sun 3 PM, Jarvis Square Theater, 1439 W. Jarvis, 773-655-7197, theatreatl.org, \$22.

RR After the hurricane
A photographer and an agoraphobe connect in *Alabaster*.

Audrey Cefaly's new play, receiving its world premiere at 16th Street Theater as part of the National New Play Network 11-theater rolling world premiere, tells the story of a photographer who comes to shoot a lonely agoraphobe in *Alabaster*, Alabama, and ends up having an affair with her. The fact that the plot sounds a lot like *The Bridges of Madison County* is even joked about by one of the characters late in the play, but actually the differences between this story and that one are so profound, you would be forgiven for not noticing the parallel.

That's because Cefaly focuses not on romance but on the scars her characters carry on their bodies (the protagonist is working on a project photographing profoundly scarred women) and in their souls. The photographer, Alice (Jessica Kadish), is still mourning the loss of her lover and the child she carried. Her photographic

subject (and fling), June (Mandy Walsh), is the only survivor of a hurricane that killed her mother, father, and sister—and left her for dead under a pile of rubble.

The beauty of Cefaly's writing is the graceful way she reveals the details of her characters' lives, one piece at a time, the way we reveal ourselves in real life. Slowly the walls come down, and slowly we show the flawed human beings behind our carefully constructed personae. This refusal to push the story means that stretches of Cefaly's story are as slow as life—and as opaque—but the reward for waiting the scenes out are moments of soul-shaking drama, as when June delivers an eyewitness account of a hurricane landfall.

Ann Filmer's elegant production mines everything wonderful about Cefaly's play, and you couldn't ask for four better actors than the ones who grace Filmer's ensemble. Kadish in particular shines as the spoiled, cynical, psychologically damaged photographer. The way she delivers the moving last lines of the play just slayed me. —**JACK HELBIG** *ALABASTER* Through 3/1: Thu-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 4 and 8 PM; also Sun 2/16 and 3/1, 3 PM, 16th Street Theater, 6420 16th, Berwyn, 708-795-6704, 16thstreettheater.org, \$30 reserved, \$22 general admission, \$18 Berwyn residents, low-income, and military.

Dance: Ten; Book: Three
Soaring music but a sagging story in *An American in Paris*.

You don't have to know the classic 1951 movie musical to be disappointed by this 2015 stage version, but it helps. Where the original (directed by Vincente Minnelli from a screenplay by Alan Jay Lerner) was lighthearted and funny and utterly charming, the 2015 version is dark and complicated and only intermittently funny. The problem lies with Craig Lucas's book, though given the intensely collaborative nature of Broadway musicals one never knows if Lucas dreamed up the myriad bad choices in his story or was strong-armed into making them.

Lucas keeps most of the characters and the same basic story (American expat meets French woman, American expat loses French woman, American expat gets French woman back), but he mixes in unnecessary additional characters, distracting subplots, and an overly detailed backstory involving the Nazi occupation of France and the Holocaust. (The stage version is set in the year after the August 24, 1944, liberation of France.)

Luckily, the folks who put together the musical never lost sight of the fact that the heart of the show is George and Ira Gershwin's winning songs—some of which appear in the movie ("I Got Rhythm," "S Wonderful")—along with selections from other musicals ("Shall We Dance?," "They Can't Take That Away from Me").

The Drury Lane orchestra, under the direction of Chris Sargent, does Gershwin proud. As does director/choreographer Lynne Kurziel-Formato and her ensemble of triple threats. The dance sequences in the show are to die for, each one bigger, stronger, and more amazing than the previous one. Even more impressive, though, is her cast, who face the formidable task of competing with the likes of Gene Kelly and Leslie Caron. Josh Drake is almost as likeable as Kelly in the lead role of Jerry Mulligan, and Skyler Adams gives the film's Eeyore-like Oscar Levant a run for his money as Jerry's friend, Adam. But the real revelation in the show is

THEATER

Leigh-Ann Esty, who reveals the grit and fire in Lise, a character Caron only succeeded in making cute. —**JACK HELBIG** ***AN AMERICAN IN PARIS** Through 3/29: Wed 1:30 PM, Thu 1:30 and 8 PM, Fri 8 PM, Sat 3 and 8 PM, Sun 2 and 6 PM, Drury Lane Theatre, 100 Drury Lane, Oakbrook Terrace, 630-530-0111, drurylaneoakbrook.com, \$60-\$75, \$55 matinees for seniors.*

RR Ibsen gets a makeover
Raven's new adaptation of *A Doll's House* updates the language.

In the Chicago premiere of this Henrik Ibsen adaptation, Raven Theatre and director Lauren Shouse create masterful suspense—something that could be difficult to pull off with a setting of 1870s Norway. The strength of Anne-Charlotte Hanes Harvey's translation, adapted by herself and Kirsten Brandt, is its use of contemporary language and a tighter, two-act structure to drive this proto-feminist tale of a disintegrating marriage and a young woman discovering herself.

Nora, played by an ebullient and shape-shifting Amira Danan, is a young, cooped-up housewife with little to keep her company but her secrets. While hints of a freethinking spirit shine through, her energy seems more or less stifled by her manipulative husband Torvald, played with Ted Bundy-like charm by Gage Wallace. His seemingly sweet affections for her quickly turn sickening, with animal pet names that reek of chauvinism and manipulation. These two standout performances drive the story as Nora begins to unravel, evidenced by her queasy and hypnotic tarantella dance, and Torvald reveals himself to be the poster child for white male privilege, something we all spotted a mile away.

While the adaptation succeeds in modernizing the dialogue and emotional peaks of this story, originally penned in 1879, Nora's unspeakable crime, a forged loan document, feels somewhat dated by comparison. Perhaps the stakes could be raised to a more relatable and resonant type of wrongdoing. That would make Nora's final transformation, a complicated arc Danan plays with grit and subtlety, that much more satisfying. —**MARISSA OBERLANDER** ***A DOLL'S HOUSE** Through 3/22: Thu-Sat 7:30 PM, Sun 3 PM, Raven Theatre, 6157 N. Clark, 773-338-2177, raven theatre.com, \$46 (\$43 online), seniors/teachers \$41 (\$38 online), students, active military, and veterans, \$15.*

Song of Herself

A new musical of *Emma* is charming but slight.

With Autumn de Wilde's new film version of Jane Austen's *Emma* being released next week (the seventh time it's been adapted for film or TV, not counting Amy Heckerling's *Clueless*), it seems propitious that Chicago Shakespeare has Paul Gordon's musical adaptation currently on the boards. I missed Gordon's world-premiere musical of *Sense and Sensibility* on Navy Pier in 2015. But with *Emma*, Gordon and director Barbara Gaines create a world that, while charming, doesn't really do much to expand the dramatic universe of Highwood, the bucolic country estate where self-involved Emma (Lora Lee Gayer) plots the romantic futures of others—with unforeseen results.

Part of the problem is that the songs and narration, while tidy and efficient at streamlining the story, lack

deeper resonance. There's a distinct sense that we're being steered along, rather as if we're on a Regency-era reenactment, chuckling at the social faux pas unleashed by Emma's meddling. But the actual stakes here feel too low. The social distinctions among Emma, the self-assured poor-but-clever Jane Fairfax (Erica Stephan), and "natural child" Harriet Smith (Ephie Aardema)—an orphan of uncertain parentage and limited worldly awareness—are glossed over, despite the fact that marriage means something quite different to all of them.

Emma's conscience and foil, Mr. Knightley (Brad Standley), sings the title song with emotion and fire. But as the spark to this flame, Gayer remains too much on the surface. Strong supporting comic turns from Bri Sudia's affected Mrs. Elton (an Austenian take on Moira from *Schitt's Creek*) and Larry Yando's hypochondriacal Mr. Woodhouse deserve note, and it all looks and sounds quite handsome. But it never makes the case for why we need to hear this story told in song. —**KERRY REID** ***EMMA** Through 3/15: Tue and Thu-Fri, 7:30 PM, Wed 1 PM and 7:30 PM, Sat 3 PM and 8 PM, Sun 2 PM; also Sun 3/15, 6:30 PM; see website for complete schedule. Chicago Shakespeare Theater, 800 E. Grand, 312-595-5600, chicagoshakes.com, \$49-\$90.*

RR When the whistle blows
An American intelligence officer faces divided loyalties.

"You're a traitor to me." Everything about Roan @ the Gates, the magnificent show by playwright Christina Telesca Gorman, directed by Lexi Saunders, hangs on the way Nat (Jasmine Bracey) chooses to inflect that line.

Nat speaks it to Roan (Brenda Barrie), a dissident NSA whistleblower and Nat's wife. Much like Edward Snowden, Roan makes a series of revelations about American intelligence so damning that she has to secure emergency asylum in Russia. Nat, marooned stateside, communicating with Roan over glitchy encrypted video calls, could be saying: "You're a traitor to me—just like the news, the feds, and everybody else says you are."

But she isn't saying it like that. Nat, a public interest lawyer, believes in Roan's cause and wants nothing more than to help out. Her love is clumsy, all-assertive. Bracey crafts her role into a many-sided study in what intimacy means: she's a believer in touch, in deep private understanding between souls. She knows, for instance, that Roan only cries to one song ("The Star-Spangled Banner"). But Roan's selfless patriotism—her "grand gesture," as Nat puts it—comes at the cost of shutting Nat out completely. Having never agreed to be anyone's sacrifice to the public good, Nat stakes everything on her refusal to let Roan's heroism drown out her hurt. "You're a traitor," she announces, fully aware of how self-righteous it sounds, "to me."

This American Blues Theater production thrives in that hopelessly messy space between public and private responsibility, and should be seen by anyone who's ever been trapped there, as we all have. —**MAX MALLER** ***ROAN @ THE GATES** Through 2/29: Thu-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 3 and 7:30 PM, Sun 2:30 PM; also Mon, 2/24, 7:30 PM, and Thu 2/27, 2:30 PM; Sat 2/29, 3 PM only, Stage 773, 1225 W. Belmont, 773-327-5252, americanbluestheater.com, \$29 Thu-Fri, \$39 Sat-Sun. *



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FILM

AND THEN WE DANCED

Dir. Levan Akin, 113 min.

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And Then We Danced

INTERVIEW

How *And Then We Danced* changed a nation

Levan Akin's latest feature makes history for LGBTQ+ visibility in Georgia.

By JOSH FLANDERS

It is a testament to the power of art when a fictional film can change how an entire country addresses LGBTQ+ rights. Such is the case with *And Then We Danced*, whose screening in the country of Georgia led to antagonistic riots and ultimately shed light on marginalized communities. Director Levan Akin's beautiful love story is set to traditional Georgian dance and music, as Merab, a young competitive dancer, puts his future in jeopardy when he falls for a talented fellow male dancer. The direction and cinematography focus more on showing than telling in this sumptuous, passionate, and joyful story of discovery and rebellion.

"The film is really my love letter to Georgia," says Akin, who is of Georgian descent but was born and raised in Stockholm, Sweden. In an interview at the Sundance Film Festival, he explains how he wanted to include traditional Georgian dance in the film "for pure cinema . . . you can tell so much about Georgian dance and society without them talking about it." He

shows how a new generation honors tradition while transforming it. "Nobody is allowed to tell anybody what they need to be in order to love your tradition and how you choose to interpret it."

The film also reflects his love of the polyphonic singing unique to Georgia, especially a hauntingly beautiful and passionate a cappella moment where the camera glides across the transfixed faces of several generations of artists. Akin met cinematographer Lisabi Fridell through a producer and after ten minutes on Skype was convinced they had to work together. Their relationship was "very organic" Akin recalls, and Fridell's lens becomes a principal storyteller.

And Then We Danced introduces Levan Gelbakhiani, the film's star, who is a natural actor and dancer, easily charismatic and vulnerable. He threw himself into this performance, rehearsing Georgian dance for three months prior to shooting. One of the final scenes is an intense combination of traditional and

contemporary dance. "We had some choreography, but they gave me space where I can improvise for myself," he says. The results are breathtaking.

Family plays an important role in the film and in Georgian life—Merab lives with his mother, grandmother, and brother. "For socioeconomic reasons you can't move out and get your own flat," Akin says. "Family is super important to survive in Georgia." There is also this intergenerational dynamic, as the grandmother was a dancer, too. "I have an affinity from loving Tennessee Williams of families that are down and out and still live in the past."

Since *And Then We Danced* premiered at Cannes in 2019, it has been a whirlwind for Akin, who feels existentially exhausted. "This is the first LGBTQ+ film to come out of not just Georgia but the whole region," he says, proudly. After screening in Tbilisi, Georgia's largest city, "we had to stop after three days because of riots," which he said were protests motivated by the church and, indirectly, the government. They had 30 police at every screening, along with metal detectors. The film brought the conversation about enforcing existing laws protecting LGBTQ+ individuals to the surface for the first time. People who had never seen gay people onscreen realized they are just regular Georgians. "I don't know if that would have happened if not for this movie," Akins says.

The film has been a huge international success with distribution rights to 40 countries. Now when Gelbakhiani walks the streets, Georgian youth recognize him. "Some teenagers were having a birthday celebration in a bar, I was in front of the window," he says. "They were playing the soundtrack to the film," he says. He says the teens ran outside singing the songs from his movie, in disbelief that it was him.

"The movie soundtrack has become a thing in Georgia, they play it at demonstrations," Akin says with amazement. "It's like the soundtrack of a movement." And indeed, *And Then We Danced* has become a phenomenon. And with a tinge of continuing existential exhaustion he adds, "It's pretty cool to make a film that changes the world and the state of things in the country."

@joshua_flanders



Horse Girl

NOW PLAYING

RR And Then We Danced

Good queer love stories are few and far between, with most succumbing to stereotypes and tragic endings and other common movie sins. Occasionally, however, an LGBTQ+ film surfaces with enough momentum to hit the mainstream, and, even more rarely, that film strikes all the right notes. There are undoubtedly parallels to Luca Guadagnino's 2017 film *Call Me By Your Name*; both tell coming-of-age coming-out stories in which two young men end up in a passionate, forbidden, and fleeting romance. Levan Akin's rendition does it even better. *And Then We Danced* follows Merab, a Georgian dancer immediately taken with the newest arrival in his class, Irakli. Built with flawless pacing and agonizing tension, their relationship as dance competitors and friends slowly blossoms into something more. It's innocent and confusing and exploratory, full of that boyish flirtation only international queer films seem to capture. The characters are all original (and utterly beautiful), allowing for instant emotional investment. Moments of song and dance provide stunning glimpses into modern Georgian life, capturing the incredible tradition and culture of the country, weaving in reminders that Georgia is still plagued with LGBTQ+ discrimination. *And Then We Danced* is thus part political rebellion, part masterpiece romance, and a true privilege to witness. **—TARYN ALLEN 113 min. Music Box Theatre**

The Coldest Game

You'd expect a film that involves espionage and a high-stakes chess tournament during the height of the Cold War to leave you on the edge of your seat. But then

there's *The Coldest Game*. Bill Pullman (who stepped into the lead role after the original actor William Hurt was injured just before production began) gives a fantastic performance as Professor Joshua Mansky, a brilliant mathematician and prolific alcoholic who is kidnapped by government agents and brought to Warsaw to compete against the Russians at chess after their first pick was murdered. However, Pullman alone can't make up for a premise that never completely gels, memorable characters (Robert Więckiewicz as the Palace of Culture and Science director is a welcome exception), and loads of clichés. A few moments of dark humor beg to transform the film into a Vonnegut-type satire—it might have been better served had it been steered in that direction.

—JAMIE LUDWIG 96 min. Netflix

Downhill

I don't quite understand the point of remaking a European art film as a generic American comedy—especially one as overwrought as Ruben Östlund's *Force Majeure* (2014)—but apparently someone felt it necessary. Nat Faxon and Jim Rash's disenchanting endeavor stars Will Ferrell and Julia Louis-Dreyfus as a married couple, Pete and Billie, on a ski vacation in Austria with their kids. One day, what appears to be an avalanche careens toward the family as they're enjoying lunch; Billie attempts to protect their children, while Pete grabs his iPhone and runs away, bringing about marked tension between the two. Cowritten by Faxon, Rash, and Jesse Armstrong, the film oversimplifies the complexities of the original, however contrived they might have been, and generally lacks Östlund's subtlety and plaintiveness. Louis-Dreyfus, who also coproduced, is the best part of this otherwise middling

comedy, but even her vexatious zeal can't save it. With Miranda Otto, Zach Woods, and Zoë Chao. **—KATHLEEN SACHS R, 86 min. In wide release**

RR The Homestretch

The Homestretch, the latest social-issue documentary from Kartemquin Films, succeeds surprisingly well in having its cake and eating it too. Directors Anne De Mare and Kirsten Kelly persuasively indict America's failure to assist homeless teenagers, which a title estimates at 1.6 million people. Yet the stories they present are genuinely uplifting, charting the lives of three homeless Chicago teens as they find housing, complete their high school educations, and ready themselves for the adult world. De Mare and Kelly are up-front about the challenges their subjects face—chiefly their memories of abuse and abandonment—though the tone remains optimistic. It's an impressive balancing act. **—BEN SACHS 90 min. Discussion between Gina Samuels and Eve Ewing follows the screening. Thu 2/13, 7 PM. Harper Theater**

RR Horse Girl

Cowritten by Alison Brie and director Jeff Baena, *Horse Girl* starts off as a basic quirky indie rom-com about a socially awkward girl named Sarah (Brie) who loves horses and supernatural shows starring Matthew Gray Gubler. But it quickly becomes a harrowing tale of mental illness as Sarah begins slipping into delusion and experiencing an acute loss of time. First come the nosebleeds, then the intense sleepwalking spells during which she does things like scratch the walls in her apartment or stand blank-faced in a deserted area clutching a pay phone. In a search for answers, Sarah combines Internet conspiracy theories with her family's history of mental illness and rambles about aliens, time loops, and clones to those around her. But they all think she's gone mad, which only makes her feel more isolated and paranoid. Brie's performance is powerful and the film's editing does a superb job of mixing Sarah's obscured perception with reality, succeeding in offering an unsettling look into the mind of someone who suffers from a severe mental illness. **—MARISSA DE LA CERDA R, 103 min. Netflix**

RR The King of Comedy

Martin Scorsese's 1983 movie about an aspiring comic (Robert De Niro) who kidnaps a talk-show host (Jerry Lewis) is clearly an extension of *Taxi Driver*—both in its themes of obsession and its ambiguous stylistic mixture of fantasy and reality (it's impossible to tell where one ends and the other begins—my feeling is that the entire last half of the film takes place in the De Niro character's mind). But the shift in archetypes from Catholic to Jewish, plus the visual shift from extravagant expressionism to flat, overlit TV images, radically alters the point of view; you feel for the first time that Scorsese is trying to distance himself from his characters—that he finds them grotesque. The uncenteredness of the film is irritating, though it's irritating in an ambitious, risk-taking

way. You'd better see for yourself. With Diahnne Abbott and Sandra Bernhard. **—DAVE KEHR PG, 109 min. Thu 2/13, 7 PM. Doc Films**

RR Lady Vengeance

After *Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance* and *Oldboy*, Korean director Chan-wook Park completes his "revenge trilogy" with this ravishing black comedy about a notorious child killer (the delicate beauty Yeong-ae Lee) released from prison after serving a 14-year sentence. Park is the most vexing talent to emerge from the "extreme Asian" genre, a superb visual stylist whose comic book plots always seem to fight a losing battle with banality. Like "Cut," his episode from the recent anthology film *Three . . . Extremes*, this 2005 feature finds him interrogating his own fascination with revenge and ritualized torture, a welcome glimmer of introspection that, combined with the extraordinary color palette, makes this an ideal introduction to his work. In Korean with subtitles. **—J.R. JONES R, 112 min. Fri 2/14, 3:45 PM and Tue 2/18, 6 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center**

RR Love and Anarchy

Passion, in its various forms, doesn't mix with politics, and nowhere is this clearer than in Lina Wertmüller's marvelous 1973 study of a simple peasant (Giancarlo Giannini) with a mission to assassinate Mussolini, and of the two ladies of Rome's most decadent and sumptuous brothel who innocently (yet destructively) manipulate his anarchist ardor—and ultimately set up his destruction. A giddy, Felliniesque portrait of human feelings building to a fever pitch. With Mariangela Melato, Eros Pagni, and Lina Polito. In Italian with subtitles. **—DON DRUKER R, 120 min. Sun 2/16, 7 PM. Doc Films**

RR Meek's Cutoff

Imagine a collaboration between John Ford and Wallace Stevens and you might get a sense of what Kelly Reichardt (*Wendy and Lucy*) pulls off here: a sincere re-creation of the pioneer experience (2010), brought to life through careful, often unexpected detail. A small group of settlers, led by the self-mythologizing scout Meek, gets lost in the Oregon desert on its way west. The ensuing tension brings out everyone's worst qualities, which start to undermine the already fragile social dynamic. Given the emphasis screenwriter Jon Raymond places on religious fervor, naivete, and xenophobia, the film makes for an effective allegory about the United States' ongoing misdirection in confronting other cultures. Yet Reichardt keeps this so hypnotic from shot to shot that you can easily get wrapped up in it as a sensory experience. As the title character, Bruce Greenwood gives a fascinating and understated performance; the cast also includes Michelle Williams, Paul Dano, Will Patton, Zoe Kazan, and Shirley Henderson. **—BEN SACHS PG, 104 min. Tue 2/18, 9:30 PM. Doc Films**

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FILM



Portrait of a Lady on Fire

Good, corny fun develops when Italian-American widow Loretta Castorini (Cher) falls in love with her fiancé's brother Ronny Cammareri (Nicolas Cage). Director Norman Jewison and screenwriter John Patrick Shanley milk the New York settings, accents, and folkways for all they're worth—although those familiar with certain Manhattan locations may be dismayed to find them transplanted to Brooklyn—and the broad Italian family humor gets so thick at times that you could cut it with a bread knife. Among the “adorable” secondary cast are Vincent Gardenia, Olympia Dukakis, Danny Aiello, Julie Bovasso, and Feodor Chaliapin Jr., but most of the show belongs to Cher and Cage, both of whom are at their energetic best. Dick Hyman is in charge of the hyperbolic music, which starts off with “That’s Amore” to clue us all in to what we should expect. —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** 102 min. *Fri 2/14-Mon 2/17, 11 PM. Logan Theatre*

RR *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*

With her coming-of-age trilogy of *Water Lilies*, *Tomboy*, and *Girlhood*, Céline Sciamma is unmatched in terms of telling dynamic queer stories. Sciamma's most recent feature, *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*, is the culmination of sapphic filmmaking set aflame. Set in 18th-century France, Marianne (Noémie Merlant) is commissioned to paint the portrait of Héloïse (Adèle Haenel) before she is to be married. Marianne must paint Héloïse in secret as she's uncertain about her marriage and her future, so she quietly observes her day in and day out, forging an intimate bond that cannot be ignored. *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* not only understands the depths of first love, but also the yearning and repressed desire that comes with love that has so often been considered unworthy or illegitimate. Claire Mathon's cinematography is a standout, as is the film's understated yet deeply powerful performances. It's a slow burn, sure, but the embers are remarkable. *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* is a refreshingly modern period

piece that begs for a brave new world of lesbian cinema. —**CODY CORRALL** *R, 121 min. Preview Wed 2/12, 7 PM at Music Box Theatre. Opens 2/21 at Music Box Theatre*

Revenge of the Mekons

This in-depth documentary follows the Mekons' 40-year metamorphosis from crusty, drunken schoolboys in Leeds, England, making a racket in Gang of Four's rehearsal space on borrowed instruments, to internationally based alt-country pioneers. Director Joe Angio weaves together reminiscences from the band's animated and eclectic members as well as colleagues, friends, and superfans (a couple of whom have Jon Langford's dirty jeans hanging up in their trophy room next to Joey Ramone's). The Mekons made Chicago their home base in the early 90s, and Langford and Sally Timms, two of the most visible members, still live here, so there are mentions of Langford's side projects and of such local haunts as the Hideout. The highlight of the movie is a riotous, high-energy performance recorded at legendary Logan Square shithole the Mutiny. —**LUCA CIMARUSTI** 95 min. *Sally Timms of the Mekons will be in attendance for a Q&A after the screening. Wed 2/19, 7:30 PM. Beverly Arts Center*

RR The Umbrellas of Cherbourg

Jacques Demy's 1964 “film opera,” with music by Michel Legrand, has a reputation for sappiness it doesn't deserve. The chief feature of Demy's direction is his deft avoidance of the pat, the obvious, and the sentimental, which is no mean feat when you're dealing with material as self-consciously simple as this. Catherine Deneuve loses her fiancé to the draft; he's wounded and doesn't write, so she reluctantly marries someone else. With Anne Vernon, Nino Castelnuovo, and Marc Michel. In French with subtitles. —**DAVE KEHR** 91 min. *Fri 2/14-Sat 2/15, 2 PM*



The current Beach Bunny lineup, from left to right: bassist Anthony Vaccaro, guitarist Matt Henkels, drummer Jon Alvarado, and singer, guitarist, and songwriter Lili Trifilio. BRANDON HOEG

Beach Bunny jump straight to the championship round

Lili Trifilio and her indie-punk band have climbed from Chicago's DIY scene to stages most musicians never reach, and their first studio album, *Honeymoon*, comes out just this week.

By JACK RIEDY

When Lili Trifilio shakes off the cold in a Wicker Park coffee shop in the middle of a January snowstorm, her asymmetrical pink hair feels beamed in from a sunnier dimension. Since Trifilio's band Beach Bunny evolved from a solo project into a regular group, their heartfelt, punky indie pop has built a devoted audience so quickly that they've barely been able to keep up.

Trifilio is the lyricist and lead singer, backed by guitarist Matt Henkels, bassist Anthony Vaccaro, and drummer Jonathan Alvarado. The first Beach Bunny lineup only started doing shows in suburban parking lots in summer 2017, but within two years Trifilio and the band have played Riot Fest and Lollapalooza and landed a song on the *Billboard* charts for 12 weeks. In April, they'll make their first appearance at Coachella. Even more impressive, they've done it all before re-

leasing an album: *Honeymoon*, their full-length studio debut, arrives on Valentine's Day.

Trifilio, 23, grew up in Chicago and took guitar lessons in middle school, encouraged by her parents, who wanted her to try a variety of after-school activities. She sang in school choirs but didn't otherwise perform much, aside from playing cover songs at talent shows. Trifilio's interest in modern rock began when she was attending Resurrection College Prep

in Edison Park and she and her friend Rachel Vogrich started looking up bands they saw on Lollapalooza lineups. In June 2015, the two of them went to see Hippo Campus at Lincoln Hall, knowing only a single song from their discography. "After we saw them, we were both like, 'Whoa, that was the best concert we've ever been to ever,'" Trifilio says. "I was like 'I'm ready to write music, let's do this.'"

Trifilio and Vogrich began writing together, forming the short-lived duo Fingers x Crossed. "A lot of our songs consisted of singing of heart-break and loving guys that didn't love us back," Vogrich says. They played shows as a two-piece at Wire in Berwyn and at Bottom Lounge—both sang, and Trifilio played guitar. Vogrich recalls passing hand-burned CDs of their EP to Nashville group Coin at Lollapalooza in summer 2015, hoping that their band name's similarity to the Coin song title "Fingers Crossed" would catch their eye.

Beach Bunny began as an outlet for Trifilio's songs following the duo's dissolution in fall 2015. Though *Honeymoon* is the first Beach Bunny studio album, the band already has four EPs, a single, and a live Audiotree session—and the majority of those releases are basically Trifilio solo projects. She recorded her first two EPs, *Animalism* (December 2015) and *Pool Party* (August 2016), at home on acoustic guitar and ukulele, putting them out herself via Bandcamp, Soundcloud, and various streaming services. For *Crybaby*, which includes early live favorites "Boys" and "February," she had her friend Ryan Adams add drums. Around the same time that EP came out—in summer 2017—she put together the first Beach Bunny band.

Trifilio was already playing shows on her own, but she wanted to compete in a battle of the bands—a battle where one of the other groups included an ex-boyfriend, which she maintains was a coincidence. "It wasn't like a vengeance thing, and it wasn't to get back together with him or anything. I just wanted to compete," she says, laughing.

Trifilio knew Henkels and Alvarado through mutual friends and invited them aboard. (Alvarado was also in the ex's group.) "I think that we both adored Lili's songwriting from the start," Henkels says. "It's super memorable and charming."

After the battle (which the ex's band won), Beach Bunny solidified their chemistry with steady practicing and gigging. By now, Trifilio can anticipate their instrumental parts as she writes songs. "Matt and I would butt heads sometimes, where my vocal melody and what

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The cover of Beach Bunny's *Honeymoon*

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Listening party for Beach Bunny's new album, *Honeymoon*, plus DJ sets from Beach Bunny, Chris Salty, and special guests. Thu 2/13, 8 PM, Sleeping Village, 3734 W. Belmont, free with reservation (required by Thu 2/6), 21+

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he wanted to play on guitar would sometimes clash," she says. "But just by jamming over time, he knows how to complement my voice."

Her bandmates share the sentiment: "When Lili brings us a demo, we can quickly kind of piece it together into a full-band thing by writing our own instrumental parts and tweaking them where it's necessary," they explain, in an e-mail sent as a group.

Beach Bunny had added a bassist by August 2017, and they went through a few before finding Vaccaro—he came aboard in January 2019, so *Honeymoon* is his first recording with the band. Throughout 2017 and 2018, the members of Beach Bunny split their time between college classes (Trifilio and Henkels had started at DePaul in fall 2015) and driving out to the suburbs with friends, where they found a place for the band in the DIY scene—especially in Elgin, where Alvarado and Henkels had gone to South Elgin High. They learned about booking, songwriting, and gear from their peers.

"There was a ton of guidance that I don't think I would have had without having that DIY community," Trifilio says. Those connections helped the band smoothly transition into Chicago's scene, where they gigged frequently, playing DIY shows and ticketed concerts at clubs. "Everyone I've met through DIY has still stuck around over all the years," she says. "That's been really sweet, to still see people at bigger shows buying tickets, when I'm like, 'You've seen me

enough, you don't need to do that, thank you.'"

Beach Bunny had their breakout hit in summer 2019, when the title track from the 2018 EP *Prom Queen* peaked at number 26 on the *Billboard* Hot Rock Songs chart—it's now closing in on 39 million Spotify plays, boosted by its popularity on video-streaming app TikTok (which had just helped propel Lil Nas X's "Old Town Road" into orbit). The song confronts oppressive female beauty standards using the language of grade school toys and high school popularity contests, which make it an irresistible incitement to lip-synching or singing along: "I'm no Quick Curl Barbie / I was never cut out for prom queen."

Prom Queen and the stand-alone single that preceded it, "Sports," were recorded in part at Lubeck Studios in Mount Prospect with engineer Ray Ortiz, who'd worked with one of Alvarado's other groups, the recently disbanded Mt. Pocono. "With a band like Beach Bunny, there wasn't a need to be super experimental with the studio," he recalls. "They all knew what they wanted to hear, which was great."

"Prom Queen" departs from Trifilio's usual romantic themes because she wrote it for a friend who was struggling with an eating disorder. "I knew they were a big Beach Bunny fan," she says, "so it's like, 'All right, maybe this song can help in some way.'"

Trifilio's lyrics mostly reflect her own perspective, but they resonate easily with listeners going through their own rough patches. "I think Lili makes music that allows people to react in a way that's like, 'Oh shit, I'm not alone, and I'm not the only person out there that feels this way,'" Vogrich says.

Beach Bunny fan Jimmy Kemper, who lives in River North, describes the band's music as "powerfully simple, catchy songs that nail the universal angst of the teenage experience." Meagan Hughes, a fan from Wicker Park, elaborates: "The vulnerability and genuineness of their music is really what gets me. Lili's not afraid to be called naive or show how deeply she falls for someone. Their music is somehow never cheesy regardless of this, because it's so genuine," she says. "Also their live shows are dope, 'cause everyone knows all the words and it's a big community."

Trifilio doesn't take this kind of reaction for granted. "If I'm singing something sad, and someone listens to it and they feel some closure or comfort, that's amazing," she says. "There's a ton of younger girls who have come up to me after shows and been like, 'Hey, this helped me get through this, it was a wake-up call.' Anytime someone says something like that, I just start crying because I'm a sensitive person, so I'm like, 'Oh my God, I'm glad you're better!'"

Beach Bunny's *Honeymoon* is the kind of album best heard through the aux cord in a

decades-old sedan packed full of sweaty friends on a sunny day. Though its nine songs are mostly about heartbreak, it's dressed up in vibrant colors—and the group ornament their straightforward guitar-bass-drums sound with overdubbed vocal harmonies and occasional keys. With grooves built from springy bass lines and tight drums, their emo rock is danceable enough for terrestrial radio and festival stages.

"Promises" opens the album with the drums and bass locked in like a syncopated heartbeat, and then the guitar drops in with straight eighth notes, boosting the song's metabolism like a shot of adrenaline. "Part of me still hates you—how could you love someone and leave?" Trifilio sings on the chorus. "When you're all alone in your bedroom, do you ever think of me?" She says it's her favorite song on the album because it's the "most honest."

"Ms. California," the second single from *Honeymoon* (it came out in early December, following October's "Dream Boy"), is the band's first to center envy. It introduces a third character, beyond the usual *you* and *me*, to talk about the pain of learning that an ex has found someone new (and being reminded of it constantly because "she's in all your pictures").

Beach Bunny originally intended "Rearview" to be a solo song, and it begins with just Trifilio's voice and guitar. But the group jammed on it enough to realize that it needed what Trifilio calls a big "head-bopping" ending. In its coda, the song abandons metaphor to convey the emotional vortex of a breakup in a few blunt phrases: "You love me, I love you / You don't love me anymore, I still do / I'm sorry, I'm trying / I hate it when you catch me crying."

"I have a pretty good habit of using music as a therapy session," says Trifilio, laughing.

The band recorded the majority of *Honeymoon* in May 2019 at Electrical Audio, scheduling the sessions over two weekends to leave time for final exams at DePaul during the week. (Trifilio was finishing a degree in journalism, Henkels in secondary education, and Vaccaro in photography.) Though they'd finished *Prom Queen* in about a month, *Honeymoon* had a gestation period of nine months—a process the band call "super exhausting and complicated but ultimately extremely rewarding."

Beach Bunny hired Joe Reinhart to produce. They liked the work he'd done for Remo Drive and Prince Daddy & the Hyena, both of whom they'd played shows with, and they were fans of his own bands Hop Along and Algernon Cadwalader. Reinhart focused on creating a comfortable environment for the group, so they could take full advantage of the studio.

Trifilio especially appreciated the salve of the producer's calm while she worked on recording vocal harmonies—because she hadn't planned out what she'd do before entering the studio, it

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was the most difficult part of the process for her. She workshopped her vocals over loops of the backing tracks, a frustrating process of trial and error. “Maybe I get the first two lines and then just yell ‘fuck’ because I mess up one note,” she says. “And then Joe’s like, ‘It’s OK, it’s OK!’”

Trifilio also credits Reinhart with suggesting ways the band could flesh out their sound without fundamentally changing the songs. Her bandmates agree: “He’d push you, but not in a bad way,” they say. “That recording process made all of us better musicians in the long run, thanks to him.”

Beach Bunny originally intended to self-release *Honeymoon*, like all their other music, and they’d set a date for themselves in the fall. But then this summer the band got multiple offers from record labels. Trifilio had graduated that spring and was already suffering from job-hunt anxiety, but this label interest did away with that. “It was like, ‘Oh, I can just do music? For real? This is a thing that can actually happen?’” she says.

In August the band signed with New York indie Mom + Pop Music, joining a roster that includes Courtney Barnett, Cloud Nothings, Metric, and Sleater-Kinney. “Mom + Pop just had the best artist-friendly conditions,” Trifilio says.

Beach Bunny’s relationship with the label has

already helped the band reach a new level of popularity. They’d already landed the Lollapalooza gig on their own, but since signing, they’ve benefited from a few new promotions. They’re giving away tour tickets through a brand partnership with roller-skate company Moxi, and “Prom Queen” is playable on *Rock Band*. And the band’s Coachella date will be followed by a set at Primavera Sound in Spain in June.

“Ultimately, we like to look at every show the same way, no matter the scale/importance or whatever,” say Henkels, Alvarado, and Vaccaro, speaking collectively via e-mail. “We’re getting on each stage and doing the same thing every night as any other stage we play, so we really just make sure that we’re tight and ready to play.”

Trifilio calls the band’s set at last year’s Lollapalooza a “teenage dream” come true. Her remaining goals include collaborating with and doing songwriting for other performers—and she’d also love to work with Marina, Hayley Williams, or any other “pop icons,” she says. Beach Bunny’s contract with Mom + Pop lives up to the label’s artist-friendly reputation, allowing Trifilio to pursue outside work that doesn’t interfere with the band’s release dates. She’s already released a four-song EP under her own name called *Book Club*, which came out in September 2019. In December she dropped a solo

cover of Wham!’s “Last Christmas” (under the Beach Bunny name) as a fund-raiser for St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, inspired by her father’s work in cancer research and her younger brother’s successful fight against leukemia a few years prior.

Earlier this month, Trifilio performed onstage with Hippo Campus—the band she’d seen with Vogrich almost five years earlier—at First Avenue in Minneapolis. She sang their song “Way It Goes” with the fervor of a fan who’s belted along with its wordy verses countless times. “I am literally living in a dream,” she tweeted the next day.

Trifilio is working on a batch of Beach Bunny songs to follow up *Honeymoon*, though she’s unsure if they’ll come out as singles, EPs, or another album. She’s been making a conscious effort to address topics besides romance. “Less like ‘This is my relationship with someone’ and more like ‘This is my relationship with something I’ve observed in the world,’” she says. “Growing up, self-love, feminism, something like that.”

“We just want to keep making music that we’re proud of and keep being best friends while doing it,” say her bandmates. “If people keep liking the music, that’s amazing!”

Beach Bunny has gotten big enough fast enough that Trifilio worries about the reception

Honeymoon will get, an anxiety she’s never much felt with previous releases—for the first time, she has to deal with the pressure of expectations from a large fan base. “We’ve got the indie-pop kids, we’ve got these super punk emo kids that just want to thrash, and then the younger high school TikTok crowd,” she says. “It’s super strange seeing that combination at shows. It’s interesting that all those groups can somehow relate.”

To kick off a national album tour that’s already mostly sold out, Beach Bunny play Saturday, February 22, at Metro, a venue they played most recently as openers on Death Cab for Cutie’s Lollapalooza aftershow in August. Trifilio has been considering playing keyboards at the show—something she’s only ever done in the studio.

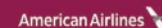
The songs on *Honeymoon*, like most of what Trifilio has written so far, are about heartbreak, but by the time they’re ready for the stage—to say nothing of recorded and released—the emotions don’t weigh on her too heavily. “At this point, I’m mostly thinking, ‘Is the crowd enjoying it? Is my voice OK?’” she says. “I’m yelling the word ‘cry’ with a smile, you know what I mean? I try not to get too sentimental about that kind of stuff.” 

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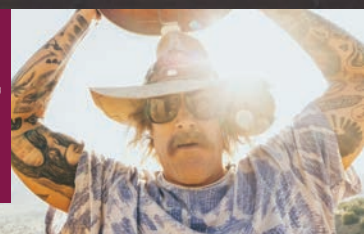
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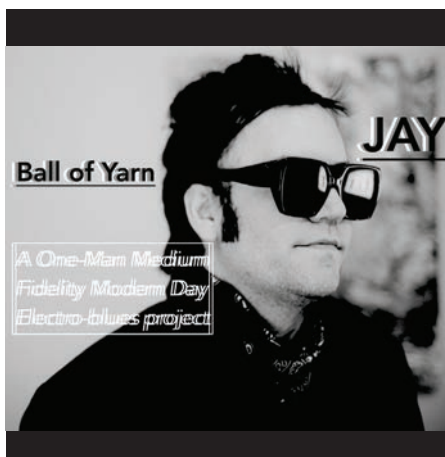
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A Reader staffer shares three musical obsessions, then asks someone (who asks someone else) to take a turn.

IN ROTATION



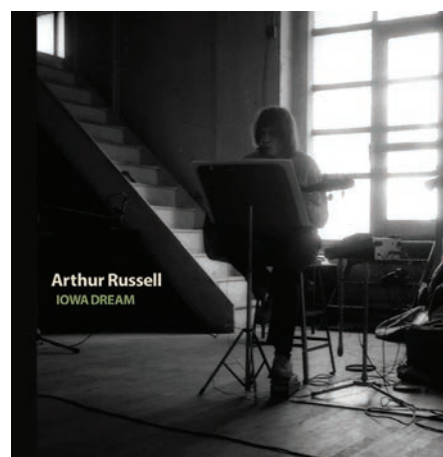
Mononymous Chicago oddball Jay released *Ball of Yarn* last month.

LEOR GALIL
Reader staff writer

Jay, *Ball of Yarn* I love trawling Bandcamp because I'm not sure how else I'd come across an album like *Ball of Yarn* (though its mononymous creator, Jay, allegedly lives in Chicago, so who knows). Accompanied by kitschy synths and drum machines, with the occasional guitar adding arpeggios or florid string bends, Jay sings in a breathy, faraway voice, warping notes till they seem to drag or robotizing his melodies with vocoder-like processing. The results are delightfully off-kilter and unmarketable, and remind me of something I might hear on a decades-old oddball private-press LP selling for hundreds of dollars—but Jay's asking just \$8 for a CD.

Nelson George, *Hip Hop America* It's shameful I waited so long to open this book, originally published in 1998. If you don't know the crucial role Nelson George has played in shaping our culture's understanding of hip-hop and pop music, *Hip Hop America* lays it bare in its second chapter. It includes a 1978 story he wrote for *Amsterdam News* that details a DJ Kool Herc party outside a Bronx high school—by George's account, one of the first pieces of journalism on hip-hop.

Trinidad James in *Uncut Gems* Before I watched the Safdie brothers' ballyhooed film *Uncut Gems*, I'd heard about nearly every cameo in it—every cameo, that is, except the one by rapper Trinidad James. So much work went into making this period piece exemplify its era, but to me nothing said "2012" as perfectly as the brief appearance of a rapper who was catapulted into fame that year.



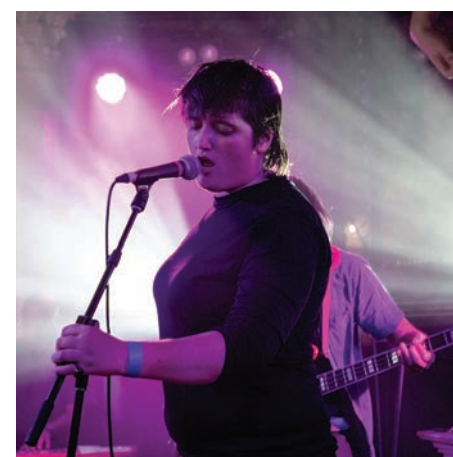
The cover of the posthumous Arthur Russell collection *Iowa Dream*

MIA JOY
Singer-songwriter

Ana Roxanne, "I'm Every Sparkly Woman" Los Angeles-based Ana Roxanne is the next ambient sensation gifted from up above. Her voice is pleasantly acrobatic, sensual, and warm, cooing gently along with her angelic drones. Ana recently finished a tour with Weyes Blood, and her 2019 debut album has moved me to tears—on any given night, it quiets my anxiety. I highly recommend watching her otherworldly performances on YouTube!

Sandii, "Zoot Kook" If you love Japanese disco-pop as much as me and also fall deeply into YouTube holes, this 1980 track might be for you. Produced by Haruomi Hosono (of Yellow Magic Orchestra fame), it's an absolute banger. Sadly, I can't find this anywhere other than YouTube—it's not to be missed!

Arthur Russell, *Iowa Dream* If we're friends, you already know about my love for prophetic disco-folk king Arthur Russell. Released in November, *Iowa Dream* is one of many posthumous Russell releases, leaving us wondering how many more magical tunes are left in the vaults. *Iowa Dream* gives us glimpses of his early heart-wrenching folk ballads, akin to those on *Love Is Overtaking Me*. There are a few funkier tunes ("I Kissed the Girl From Outer Space") and eccentric spoken-word tracks ("Barefoot in New York") that display his range and his transition from folk to avant-garde and disco. What kills me are his piano ballads, like "In Love With You for the Last Time," which feels like a song you've already loved—it's so effortlessly simple, but you know it could only come from the mind of a genius.



Australian singer-guitarist Cash Savage with her band the Last Drinks. © JOSHUA BRAYBROOK

CORY JOSÉ Singer-songwriter and front man of Laverne

Bent, "So Long Without You" Every shared-living space has a "song." When I was 20, we obsessed over Duck Sauce's Four Loko-house jam "Barbra Streisand" (oohh). I think back to a time between now and then, when I lived with two people who are practically long-lost family members—two people I still see from time to time but also miss very much. I'll skip the details, but the song we all very quickly became enamored by was the twangy downtempo track "So Long Without You" by UK duo Bent. It elevates the sampled vocals of 1970s country singer Billie Jo Spears into a summer anthem for an Ibiza club. It caught us all during romantic tiffs, so it's ingrained in our achey breaky hearts.

Interpol, "NYC" I hate saying things like "This song saved my life, yada yada," but "NYC" by Interpol really meant a lot to me as a lonely, divorce-proxied 13-year-old. I got it from a record shop that had a free compilation called *Yes New York*. I was lucky to find such a cool CD at a very rough time.

Cash Savage & the Last Drinks, "Better Than That" Let's talk Aus-pop: A must-listen is the gorgeous "Better Than That" by Cash Savage. She has such a soulful, husky voice, but she uses it smoothly here—like Joan Armatrading or Bryan Ferry. I'll be a disciple for the overlooked the rest of my life, and to me, Cash should be as big as her Australian contemporary Courtney Barnett. 📻

PICK OF THE WEEK

Ana Gabriel lives up to the title ‘La Diva de América’



Ana Gabriel
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ANA GABRIEL, ALEX FERNÁNDEZ JR.
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ANA GABRIEL, NICKNAMED “LA DIVA DE AMÉRICA,” has influenced generations of music fans since she launched her career in the 1970s. With her no-holds-barred approach to every tune and her signature vocal quality—a husky rasp that evokes long nights of crying and drinking—the Mexican singer-songwriter has mastered torch songs in a wide range of genres. Over the decades, Gabriel has had massive hits in Latin pop, rock, and most notably mariachi music. She’s released 35 studio and compilation albums and won dozens of awards, including the 2015 “Legend” award from the Hispanic Heritage Foundation, which celebrates Hispanic contributions to the United States. Though Gabriel has rarely taken explicit political stances, she commented during the ceremony on the anti-Mexican immigrant tirades of presi-

dential candidate Trump: “We can’t let them hurt us—we are a brave people, and we know why we came.” While Gabriel typically performs in venues that hold thousands, her charmingly heartfelt delivery and evocative gestures create a sense of intimacy, giving the impression that she’s sharing moments of tribulation from her own life and facing them with unfaltering courage. The chemistry between the beloved diva and her audience is electric and instantly palpable, and her concerts inevitably evolve into stirring, massive sing-alongs. Many of Mexico’s iconic traditional female singers are no longer with us, and most contemporary Latin pop skews toward rock, punk, and electronica. There’s simply no one else in the world of Latin pop and mariachi music quite like this grande dame. —CATALINA MARIA JOHNSON



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In Armitage Hall, 909 W. Armitage Ave

FRIDAY, MARCH 20 8PM

David Wilcox In Szold Hall

SATURDAY, MARCH 21 5 & 8PM

Lúnasa

FRIDAY, MARCH 27 8PM

Martin Hayes Quartet

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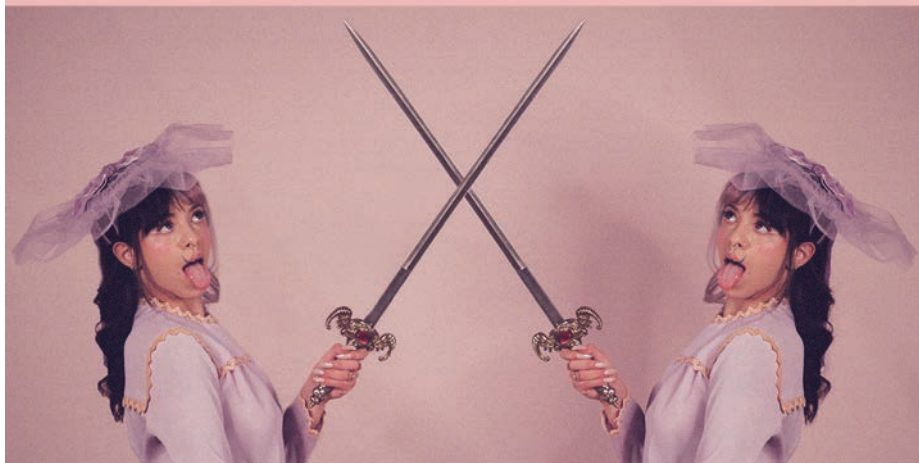
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THURSDAY13

DONNY BENÉT *Party Nails and Flugel* open.
9:15 PM, Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western, \$14, \$12 in
advance. 21+

Donny Benét cuts a memorable figure—he plays up a lothario image in his music and often wears a bright white or salmon pink blazer straight out of *Miami Vice*. The Australian multi-instrumentalist's look is seemingly crafted for maximum “Is he serious or not?” confusion, especially since Benét's chosen paradigm is sly synth-dominated 80s disco-pop with a heavy bass groove. But there's a huge gulf between disingenuous pastiche and a loving albeit tongue-in-cheek tribute to another era, and Benét clearly has a lot of admiration for his disco forebears. In a 2018 interview with Indie Berlin, he described his sound as “kind of a club band featuring Alan Vega, Giorgio Moroder, Nile Rodgers, Prince, Falco, and Demis Roussos.” That “club band” bit is important—Benét isn't just pulling from familiar names but also from the crack session players who were the backbone of that era, and affinity for their high-caliber musicianship is crystal clear in his immaculately crafted songs. His fourth and most recent album, 2018's *The Don*, is chock-full of high-energy anthems that cover a range of topics, including skipping the gym for sex (“Working Out”), online dating (“Love Online”), and trying to save a marriage with a last-minute trip to Greece (“Santorini,” whose chorus features one of his most smug and clever rhymes: “I don't want you to leave me / On the coast of Santorini”). Benét's got depth to go with his hooks, though. His most recent single, “Girl of My Dreams,” is a tender ballad about persevering through heartbreak to build new connections. Anchored by a wistful whistle, it has a relaxing feel that makes it perfect for catching your breath with a slow dance. —**ED BLAIR**

FRIDAY14

ANA GABRIEL See *Pick of the Week*, page 35.
Alex Fernández Jr. opens. 8 PM, Allstate Arena,
6920 N. Mannheim, Rosemont, \$49-\$149.

KAZE 9 PM, Elastic 3429 W. Diversey, second
floor, \$10.

Whether she's playing keyboards or leading a jazz orchestra, Satoko Fujii revels in the dynamic range of the sounds at her disposal. On *Fukushima* (Libra 2017), she elicits sounds of forlorn birdsong and mass destruction from a group of New York musicians, and with her band Gato Libre, the most recent to visit Chicago, her accordion playing covers a similarly broad spectrum. Fujii obtains even greater range from the piano, the instrument she uses most. On the keys, she weaves between bold clusters and pensive melodies, and under the piano's lid, she plays directly on the strings, pulling strands of wire through them to obtain glassy sonorities, plucking them like a harpist, or placing objects on them that make the tinkling of ivories sound like the rattling of dice in a box. Fujii records liberally; to celebrate her 60th birthday in 2018, she released one album per month, collaborating with a different project each time. Among the records was *Atody Man* (Circum Libra), the fifth recording by Kaze, a Franco-Japanese quartet that also includes drummer Peter Orin and trumpeters Natsuki Tamura and Christian Pruvost. Since all members compose and everyone draws upon both conventional and extended techniques, each of the album's six tracks exploits the dual-horn lineup in a different way. While Orin's multi-segmented “Hynotique Sympathie” ascends slowly from a haze of long brass tones to a sequence of mercurial shifts between stormy improvisation and chastened lyricism, Tamura's “Inspiration 2” stacks up masses of sound, then disperses them into explorations of microscopically detailed exchanges between subsets of the group's members. —**BILL MEYER**

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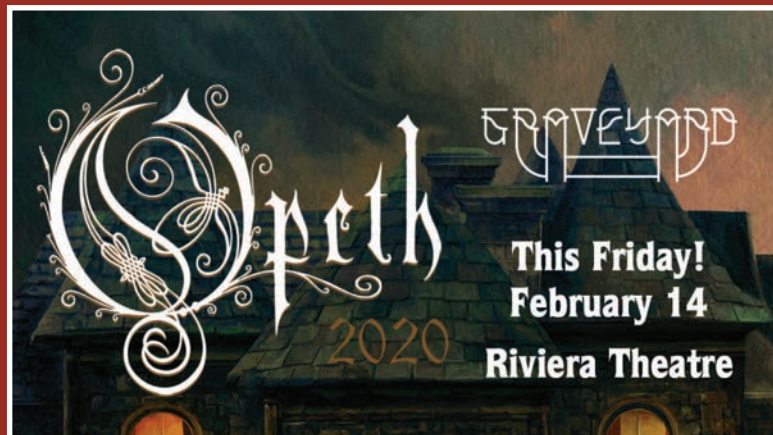
OPETH *Graveyard* opens. 7:30 PM, Riviera Theatre, 4746 N. Racine, \$38.50. 

Beloved and influential Swedish progressive metal band Opeth play Chicago for the first time in nearly three years in support of a new album, last fall's *In Cauda Venenum* ("Poison in the Tail"), released in English and Swedish versions. The band, established in 1989, have traditionally recorded only in English, so it's fascinating to hear how the mother tongue of front man Mikael Åkerfeldt interacts with their intricate sound; when he sings in Swedish (a language I do not know at all), he seems to fold his vocals in among the keyboard sweeps with a homey, organic assurance. The band initially intended to release the album in Swedish only, and recorded the English version later on. Both are worthwhile, and listening to them side by side is an opportunity to compare the language-as-sound element that doesn't come along all that often. In both languages, the album has been met with a mixed reception: rapturous praise from prog fans who love the sophisticated textures and lush arrangements (and are relieved that *In Cauda Venenum* sounds more cleanly mastered than its predecessor, 2016's *Sorceress*) and irritation from older death-metal fans, who can still hear the band's serious shredding power, albeit sparingly wielded, on "Heart in Hand" and "Next of Kin." That sort of response has been typical for the group as far back as 2002, when they put out the light *Deliverance* and the brutal *Damnation* just months apart—those releases crystallized the tension between those who see Opeth as a brilliant progressive band with a heavy war chest and those who see them as a brilliant death-metal band who tend to fritter around too much with cerebral indulgences. Either way, the key word here is "brilliant," and there's no reason Åkerfeldt and company shouldn't just keep plowing straight down that middle course. —MONICA KENDRICK

PLACK BLAGUE *Nightcrwlr* and *Nude Attitude* open; *Glitter Creeps* DJs spin. 10 PM, Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western, \$10. 21+

In 2001, Raws Schlesinger, a metal and punk drummer in Lincoln, Nebraska, embraced his leather-clad dance-music heart and founded Plack Blague—an industrial electronica project intended to unleash the rowdy gay headbanger inside every hard rocker. The project was initially something of a goof, but the audience for loud sexy gay disco proved to be bigger than anticipated. Nearly two decades later, Schlesinger continues to sweat and hump his way through albums and live shows with a never-failing barrage of floor-shaking single entendres. The 2017 Plack Blague album *Night Trax* (Ormolycka) is a fine intro to the project's testosterone-fueled aesthetic. "Body Talk" cranks the drum machine up to thrash speeds, and Schlesinger manages to sound robotic and snarky while intoning lyrics like "Each man in this meat market / Has his own personality!" "Plack-tuality" rides a deep, burping bass into panting vocals and subterranean slink. In the video for album opener "Just Another Man on the Street," Schlesinger gets ready for action—pulling on a studded jock-strap, leather boots, and gimp mask—before picking up a likely prospect to a backdrop of thrusting

jam presents



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Frankie & The Witch Fingers DAVID EVANKO

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synths. Though this music is ostensibly for men finding men, anyone with a fetish—or just an affection—for heavy leather will find something to love when Plack Blague performs live. —NOAH BERLATSKY

SATURDAY 15

FRANKIE & THE WITCH FINGERS *Modern Vices and Flesh Panthers* open. 9 PM, *Sleeping Village*, 3734 W. Belmont, \$16, \$14 in advance. 21+.

I have to admit, when I learn about a new band with a name like “Mr. Something & the Silly Somethings,” I tend to want to run away. More often than not, they’re a one-dimensional garage or punk rock group, and even if they find a home on a Burger Records cassette, they’ll never be heard from again. Even Tommy James & the Shondells, as commercially oriented as they were, did better than that back in the 60s: they tackled garage, frat rock, psychedelia, dreamy folk, and pure pop. But my cynicism about modern rockers with goofy retro names was defeated by Frankie & the Witch Fingers, who emerged out of California in 2013 with their debut album, *Sidewalk*. When I caught the band last year, they were firing on all cylinders, playing intricate but pummeling rock ‘n’ roll that’s definitely not indebted to any one genre. The experience actually gave me visions of late-60s bands such as the MC5, Public Nuisance, and the Pretty Things, who straddled garage rock and something heavier, louder, and more complicated. I guess these days that “genre” might be described as proto-punk or proto-metal, but no matter what it’s called, it made room for wah-wah pedals, funky rhythms, delay-treated atmospherics, tricky meter changes, and distorted vocals. All these elements are clear and present on Frankie & the Witch Fingers’ fifth release, last year’s *Zam*. “Dracula Drug” and “Underneath You” stretch out to nearly ten minutes, giving the band plenty of time to simmer before walloping you in the noggin with their Motor City-style chunky riffage and searing leads—and dang it, the choruses are so catchy they get stuck in said noggin too. “Dark Sorcerer” and “Pleasure” burrow into your brain via another route—they could’ve been underground “turntable hits”

back in the day, dressed in blazing wah abuse and sometimes streams of electronic bleeps and bleeps. These rowdy boys seem to have gotten freakier yet more refined and multifaceted with every release, so make sure to catch them in their stage-scorching glory before they replace it with whatever the next phase in their incendiary and unconventional rock ‘n’ roll evolution might be. —STEVE KRAKOW

MACHINE HEAD 6:30 PM, *Metro*, 3730 N. Clark, \$40, \$35 in advance. 18

The groovy, pummeling riff metal of the early 90s owes a lot to Oakland’s Machine Head. The band made their album debut on Roadrunner in 1994 with *Burn My Eyes*, just a couple years after Pantera codified the style for mainstream consumption with *Vulgar Display of Power*. Machine Head cranked out chunky, high-gain riffs over seemingly endless jackhammer-style double kick drum, and piled on the pinch harmonics and aggressive vocals. The formula was catchy and bouncy, riding on pure anger and caveman-level intellect, and a long list of bands have aped it since. It also proved undeniable to the metal-loving hordes: *Burn My Eyes* became Roadrunner’s best-selling album, a title it held till Slipknot emerged with their self-titled album in 1999. That same year, like so many great heavy bands of their generation, Machine Head went full-on nu-metal, complete with mindless riffs and rapped vocals, a style they pushed even further with 2001’s *Supercharger*. Every Machine Head album since then has been an attempt at a “return to form,” with varying results. Their most recent full-length, 2018’s *Catharsis*, falls into weird melodic mall-core territory, which bums me out—and apparently I’m not the only one. Two longtime Machine Head members, guitarist Phil Demmel and drummer Dave McClain, bailed on the band within a year of its release, and have since been replaced by veterans of Decapitated and Devilment. (Front man Robb Flynn is the only remaining original member.) It’ll be interesting to see where the band goes from here, but let’s hope they finally get back to the sturdy smashers of *Burn My Eyes*. —LUCA CIMARUSTI

MUSIC

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THE SECRET HISTORY OF CHICAGO MUSIC

PIVOTAL CHICAGO MUSICIANS THAT SOMEHOW HAVE NOT GOTTEN THEIR JUST DUES by PLASTIC CRIMEWAVE



Jimmy Johnson

WINTER BLUES

JIMMY JOHNSON IS BEST KNOWN TODAY AS AN OLDER BROTHER TO FAMOUS SOUL SINGER SYL JOHNSON, BUT BLUES FANS IN CHICAGO STILL RECOGNIZE HIM AS A HELLOVA SINGER & GUITARIST IN HIS OWN RIGHT. BORN JAMES EARL THOMPSON ON NOVEMBER 25, 1928, IN HOLLY SPRINGS, MISSISSIPPI, JIMMY WAS 1 OF 10 CHILDREN. AS A KID HE SANG GOSPEL, LEARNED PIANO, AND WORKED IN THE FIELDS, AND AFTER MOVING TO MEMPHIS AT 16, HE DID CONSTRUCTION & DUG DITCHES. IN 1950 HE FOLLOWED AN UNCLE TO THE WINDY CITY (MOVING IN NEXT TO THE LEGENDARY MAGIC SAM!) AND GOT A JOB AS A WELDER. INSPIRED BY MATT "GUITAR" MURPHY, A CHILDHOOD FRIEND, HE BOUGHT A GUITAR FROM HARRIST BILLY BOY ARNOLD AND STARTED PLAYING AROUND TOWN—WITH GOSPEL GROUP THE GOLDEN JUBILAIREES, WITH DOO-WOPPERS THE MASQUERADES, WITH BLUESMEN SLIM WILLIS & OTIS RUSH, WHILE CONTINUING TO WORK DAYS. IN 1959 HE FORMED HIS FIRST BAND, R&B COMBO THE LUCKY HEARTS, AND CHANGED HIS LAST NAME TO JOHNSON, TAKING AFTER THE ALREADY SUCCESSFUL SYL. HE TRAFFICKED MOSTLY IN R&B

FOR THE NEXT 15 YEARS, GIGGING WITH THE LIKES OF OTIS CLAY, DENISE LASALLE, AND GARLAND GREEN. IN 1974 JOHNSON RETURNED TO THE BLUES, JOINING JIMMY DAWKINS'S BAND, AND IN '75 HE TOURED JAPAN WITH OTIS RUSH. HIS FIRST SOLO BLUES ALBUM WAS "TOBACCO ROAD" IN 1978, FOLLOWED BY "JOHNSON'S WHACKS" ON DELMARK IN '79 AND "BAR ROOM PREACHER" ON ALLIGATOR IN '83—BOTH OF WHICH SHOWED OFF HIS TRICKY, SPINDLY SOLOS AND BOOMING, SOULFUL VOICE. IN 1988, JOHN WAS BADLY INJURED IN A TOUR-VAN CRASH THAT KILLED 2 BANDMATES, BUT HE WAS SOON ABLE TO PLAY GUITAR AGAIN—AND IN 1994 HE FLIRTED WITH FAME WHEN THE FRENCH RELEASE "I'M A JOCKEY" GOT PICKED UP BY VERVE FOR U.S. DISTRIBUTION. JOHNSON RECORDED WITH SYL IN 2001 AND TOURED EUROPE IN 2009, AND WHEN HE PLAYED THE CHICAGO BLUES FESTIVAL AT AGE 90 ON JUNE 7, 2019, MAYOR LIGHT-FOOT DECLARED IT "JIMMY JOHNSON DAY."

— THANKS TO JOSE BERNAL FOR RECOMMENDING J.U.!

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MONDAY17

ELECTRIC GUEST Soleima opens. 9 PM, Metro, 3730 N. Clark, \$25, \$21 in advance. 18+

Electric Guest's cofounders, vocalist-instrumentalist Asa Taccone (a Danger Mouse mentee) and drummer-producer Matthew "Cornbread" Compton, like to say they met in 2011 when they both rented rooms in a Los Angeles house that essentially functions as a dorm for musicians. An October profile

in *Paper* magazine suggests that Compton decided he wanted to collaborate after hearing Taccone's music in the house, but their professional and personal lives had already intersected in other ways. Taccone's older brother, Jorma, is part of popular comedy music trio the Lonely Island, whose 2009 debut album, *Incredibad*, used a team of producers that included both Compton and Taccone (though they didn't work on the same tracks). Whatever circumstances finally led to Electric Guest, though, I'm glad the duo got together. After two albums of midling, shapeless indie-pop, they made a slight pivot

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- 3/12** ZZ Ward w/Patrick Droney
- 3/13** Gaelic Storm **3/14** Gaelic Storm
- 3/15** DragonForce w/Unleash The Archers, Visions of Atlantis
- 3/17** Mago de Oz / Liran Roll
- 3/18** Leslie Odom Jr.
- 3/19** Olivia O'Brien
- 3/20** Chippendales **3/21** Rod Tuffcurls & The Bench Press
- 3/22** Lil Mosey
- 3/26** Black Pumas w/ Seratones **SOLD OUT**
- 3/27** Fleshgod Apocalypse
- 3/28** Sepultura, Sacred Reich, Crowbar, Art Of Shock
- 3/29** Ivy Queen
- 3/31** Lukas Nelson & Promise of the Real
- 4/3** Dennis DeYoung of STYX



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Kojey Radical NADINE FRACZKOWSK

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toward suave, R&B-influenced tracks for their Atlantic debut, October's *Kin*. On the *Kin* press run, Taccone told *Billboard* that after Electric Guest worked with Carly Rae Jepsen on her 2019 album, *Dedicated*, they became more focused on making unabashed, euphoric pop jammed with hooks. On *Kin* single "Dollar," Taccone's almost avian falsetto floats above a joyous keyboard melody, horn flourishes, and punchy percussion—Electric Guest seem to be summoning all their powers to introduce a little optimism into our darkest days, and here and there I'd swear I can feel summer sun on my face. —LEOR GALIL

WEDNESDAY18

TRIXIE MATTTEL 8 PM, Park West, 322 W. Armitage, sold out.

Drag has become so much more than queens lip-synching covers of diva classics. The more original your act is, the better, and in 2020 the possibilities are endless. The art form has permeated pop culture's language, fashion, and notions of beauty,

and it's crossed over into other creative disciplines as well, including comedy, television, and film. It's long been a symbol of liberation, and drag queens have increasingly become leaders within the LGBTQ+ community and beyond, using their platforms to elevate conversations around oppressive policies and aim deserved outrage at issues such as anti-trans legislation, sexual violence, and homelessness among queer youth. Milwaukee-born queen Trixie Mattel has parlayed her appearances on *RuPaul's Drag Race* (including her *All Stars* win) and her sparkling personality into a career in bluegrass-tinged pop, cementing her self-proclaimed status as a "Skinny Legend." She's got three albums under her belt, and on the brand-new *Barbara*, she furthers her exploration of identity, belonging, and love on songs such as "We Got the Look" and "Girl Next Door," where she mixes up her Americana sound with bits of 60s surf rock and pop-punk hooks. But Mattel's southern-influenced songs still reign supreme: on "Stranger" (a take on "I Can't Shake the Stranger Out of You" by pioneering queer country band Lavender Country) and "I Don't Have a Broken Heart," she summons raw emotion and creates a space for deeper intimacy and vulnerability in the community. She's as real as it gets, with all moving parts. —JESSE ROTI

MUSIC

KOJEY RADICAL *Kamauu opens. 8 PM, Schubas, 3159 N. Southport, \$25, \$20 in advance. 18+*

London rapper Kwadwo Adu Genfi Amponsah, aka Kojey Radical, worked in a variety of artistic mediums before trying his hand at music. Beginning at age ten, he spent nine years training as a dancer; he wrote poetry; and he graduated from the London College of Fashion with a BA in fashion illustration. He didn't begin releasing music until 2014, when he was in his early 20s, but at 27 he's focused entirely on rapping. A September *Guardian* review of one of his athletic, fashion-forward performances suggests that this streamlining of his interests had paid off: "Whether he is charging about furiously during the set's hyper-masculine grime phase, or unleashing nimble retro-funk micro-gestures later on, Radical moves like mercury: fluidly, with a shimmer." Radical's music feels ahead of the curve, cycling through a myriad of pop-friendly sounds and fitting them into his stylishly clean, effervescent hip-hop. On 2019's *Cashmere Tears* (Asylum UK/Warner UK), he cuts a path through modern funk, bending retro synths and deep rhythmic grooves into futuristic shapes; on the title track, Radical delivers loose verses that reinvigorate the classic sound of the tune's slinking, robotic talk-box vocals. —LEOR GALIL

RAPSODY *Sa-Roc, Heather Victoria, and Illi open. 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, 1375 W. Lake, \$20. 17+*

Hip-hop has welcomed a platoon of talented emerging artists over the past five years or so, but few exhibit their love for the art of rapping quite like North Carolina's Marlanna Evans, better known as Rapsody. In the late 2000s, she formed a crucial bond with star producer 9th Wonder, who signed her to his Jamla label. After dropping her debut album, 2012's *The Ideal Beautiful*, she landed a guest spot on Kendrick Lamar's 2015 masterpiece, *To Pimp a Butterfly*, contributing vocals to "Complexion (A Zulu Love)"—a high-profile appearance that enhanced her already blossoming career. In 2016, Rapsody signed with Roc Nation, which coreleased her next two albums, including last year's ambitious *Eve*. On songs named after historically important Black women in music ("Nina"), film ("Whoopi"), sports ("Serena"), abolitionism ("Sojourner"), and contemporary politics ("Michelle"), Rapsody gracefully navigates lushly produced tracks punched up with limber rhythms, her every inflection conveying the energizing glee that helps her tackle the toughest verses. Atop the minimal, despondent synth melody of "Serena," she sketches out the societal circumstances that Black women in this country have to face simply because they exist, driving home her points with fierce delivery and assassin-like focus. —LEOR GALIL

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And the Animal, Foons 2/27, 9 PM, Chop Shop, 18+

Eva Ayllón 5/10, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music

Backstreet Boys 8/1, 7:30 PM, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park, on sale Fri 2/14, noon

Bailey Minzenberger, 2/23, 4 PM, Beat Kitchen

Bearthoven 2/20, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+

Walter Beasley 5/17, 7 PM, City Winery

Ryan Beatty 5/1, 7:30 PM, Park West, on sale Fri 2/14, 10 AM

Benee, Remi Wolf 5/5, 7:30 PM, Lincoln Hall

Bigklit 2/23, 7:30 PM, Reggies' Rock Club, 18+

Black Coffee, DJ Angelo 4/10, 9 PM, Riviera Theatre, on sale Fri 2/14, 10 AM, 18+

Black Tiger Sex Machine, Apashe, Blanke, Vampa 4/4, 9 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 18+

Blackwater Holylight 4/30, 9 PM, Sleeping Village

Boombox Cartel 4/25, 9 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 18+

Camelphat 4/17, 10 PM, Radius Chicago, 18+

Thomas Comerford, Gnarnschiff 3/13, 9 PM, Hungry Brain

Coronas 4/11, 8 PM, Beat Kitchen, 17+

Curio, Krank Daddies, Devil's Hand Social Club 6/13, 8 PM, Reggies' Music Joint

Dashboard Confessional, Get Up Kids 2/28-2/29, 7 PM; 3/1, 6 PM, House of Blues, 2/28 and 2/29 are sold out

Dawg Trio 5/30, 6 and 9 PM, City Winery

Steve Dawson & Funeral Bon-sai Wedding with Quartet Parapluie, Louis Bardales 5/8, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music, on sale Fri 2/14, 9 AM

Daymaker, Dares, Wad, She Speaks in Tongues 3/9, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle

Decemberists, Fruit Bats 8/11, 7:30 PM, Auditorium Theatre, on sale Fri 2/14, 10 AM

Deftones, Gogira, Poppy 8/11, 7 PM, Huntington Bank Pavilion, on sale Fri 2/14, 10 AM

Iris DeMent, Ana Egge 4/26, 7 PM, City Winery

Denny 2/20, 8 PM, Beat Kitchen, 17+

Downlink, Phiso, DMVU, Hairitage, Crimes 6/6, 9 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+

Early Day Miners 4/15, 9:15 PM, Empty Bottle, on sale Fri 2/14, 10 AM

Elrow 5/2, 8 PM, Radius Chicago, 18+

Eluveitie 10/4, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+

Kahil El'Zabar's Ethnic Heritage Ensemble 2/28, 7 PM, The Promontory, 17+

Emin 2/22, 7 PM, North Shore Center for the Performing Arts, Skokie

Emo Night Brooklyn 4/11, 10:30 PM, Metro, 18+

Flatfoot 56, AM Taxi 3/7, 8 PM, Chop Shop, 18+

Fuzz 6/18, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

Garza 4/8, 8:30 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+

GBH, M.D.C. 5/9, 7 PM, Reggies' Rock Club, on sale Fri 2/14, noon, 17+

Girl Talk 5/3, 8 PM, Metro, on sale Fri 2/14, 10 AM, 18+

Hanging Hearts, Twin Talk 2/27, 9:30 PM, Hideout

Heartsfield 4/11, 8:30 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn, on sale Fri 2/14, 11 AM

Hockey Dad, Red Pears, Gymshorts 4/22, 8 PM, Subterranean, 17+

Horrendous, Spectral Voice, Krypts, Cloak, Like Rats 4/11, 7 PM, Reggies' Rock Club, 17+

Inhaler 5/4, 7:30 PM, Lincoln Hall

Izzy True, Thanya Iyer 2/26, 9 PM, Hungry Brain

Janet Jackson 7/27, 8 PM, United Center

Jacuzzi Boys, Cowboys 4/18, 9:30 PM, Sleeping Village

Rich Jones, Mykele Deville, David Ashley, Kai Black, Musa Reems, DJ Skoli 2/21, 10 PM, Subterranean

Juanes 5/9, 8 PM, Rosemont Theatre, Rosemont

Katie Kadan, Tamarie T & the Elektra Kumpany 2/20, 7 PM, House of Blues

LA Priest 4/5, 9:15 PM, Empty Bottle

Lightning Bug, Dark Tea 3/23, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle

Melanie Martinez 6/9, 8 PM, Huntington Bank Pavilion

Mattiel 3/26, 9 PM, Sleeping Village

Ty Maxon, MMCM, Millers 3/26, 9:30 PM, Hideout

Megadeth, Lamb of God, Trivium, In Flames 7/10, 6 PM, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park, on sale Fri 2/14, 10 AM

Anna Meredith 3/15, 8:30 PM, Co-Prosperity Sphere, 18+

Minnesota, Of The Trees, Thelem, Eastghost 4/11, 8:30 PM, Park West, 18+

Typhanie Monique 3/29, 7 PM, SPACE, Evanston

Motel Breakfast, Sleepy Gaudio, Dead Bolts 2/28, 7:30 PM, Reggies' Rock Club, 17+

Mountains for Clouds, Joie De Vivre, Harold 2/23, 9 PM, Sleeping Village

New Found Glory, Simple Plan, Knuckle Puck 6/13, 7 PM, Concord Music Hall, on sale Fri 2/14, noon

Oston, Saint Nomad, Leland Blue 4/30, 7:30 PM, Beat Kitchen, 17+

Out of Space presents Big Boi and more 6/25, 7 PM, Temperance Beer Company, Evanston, on sale Fri 2/14, 10 AM, 18+

Out of Space presents Drive-By Truckers, J.D. McPherson 6/26, 7 PM, Temperance Beer Company, Evanston, on sale Fri 2/14, 10 AM, 18+

Out of Space presents George Clinton & Parliament Funkadelic 6/28, 7 PM, Temperance Beer Company, Evanston, on sale Fri 2/14, 10 AM, 18+

Out of Space presents Neko Case and more 6/27, 7 PM, Temperance Beer Company, Evanston, on sale Fri 2/14, 10 AM, 18+

Overcoats 4/14, 8:30 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+

Jonah Parzen-Johnson, Dustin Laurenzi's Natural Language 2/20, 9 PM, Hungry Brain

Passenger 11/5, 7:30 PM, Thalia Hall

Pathology, Pyrexia, Septicemic, Virulent Excision, Vile Secretion 3/7, 8 PM, Cobra Lounge, 17+

Portland Cello Project presents Purple Reign 4/2, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston

Purgatory, Chain of Torment, Bad Blood, Another One Dead, Absent Mind, You're Dead 2/23, 7 PM, Subterranean, 17+

Radio Dept., Hater 5/2, 10 PM, Empty Bottle

Rage Against the Machine 5/19, 8 PM, United Center

Ramirez 3/8, 7 PM, Reggies' Rock Club

Eric Roberson 3/21-3/22, 8 PM, City Winery

Sanction, Seeyou spacecowboy, Yamachara, Typecaste, Crow Killer 3/12, 7 PM, Cobra Lounge

Lauren Sanderson 4/14, 8 PM, Subterranean, 17+

(Sandy) Alex G, Empath 3/31, 7:30 PM, Metro

Sex No Babies, Little Church, Cozy 2/24, 9:30 PM, Sleeping Village

Matthew Shipp/Jason Roebke/Mike Reed, Matthew Shipp solo 3/14, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+

Simrit 5/13, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

Sin Anesthesia, Malafacha, Dharma 2/22, 9 PM, House of Blues, 17+

Sin MG 2/22, 7 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+

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Snotty Nose Rez Kids 6/12, 8 PM, Schubas

So Pretty, Wood Chickens 3/11, 9:15 PM, Empty Bottle

Star Parks, Mike Adams at his Honest Weight 2/24, 9:15 PM, Empty Bottle

Stomatopod, Maple Stave, Body Futures, Nonagon 3/28, 9:30 PM, Hideout

Harrison Storm 5/27, 8 PM, Schubas, 18+

Struts, Regrettes 5/29, 7:30 PM, Riviera Theatre, on sale Fri 2/14, 10 AM

Sweet Cobra, Rlyr, Salvation 3/21, 9:30 PM, Sleeping Village

Joanne Shaw Taylor 4/22, 8:30 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn, on sale Fri 2/14, 11 AM

Otis Taylor Band 4/5, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston

312 Day featuring Every Time I Die, Nothing, Lurk, Guerrilla Warfare, High Priest, and more 3/12, 7:30 PM, Metro, 18+

Happy Traum 5/3, 2 PM, Szold Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music

Keith Washington 2/21, 8 PM, City Winery

We Came as Romans, Devil Wears Prada, Gideon, Day-seeker 3/5, 5:45 PM, House of Blues

Weight Band featuring members of The Band 5/1, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music

Young Man in a Hurry, Blisters, Yours, Mookie 3/28, 9 PM, Schubas, 18+

UPDATED

Sea and Cake, 5AM Sky 2/28-2/29, 10 PM, Empty Bottle, 2/28 added; 2/29 sold out

Still Woozy 5/29-5/30, 8 PM, Metro, 5/29 sold out; 5/30 added

Teskey Brothers, Joshy Soul 10/11, 8 PM, the Vic, tickets purchased for Thalia Hall will be honored, 17+

UPCOMING

Cam'ron 2/25, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+

Papooz, Pleasures 2/24, 8 PM, Schubas, 18+

Prostitutes, Replicant, Hot Piss, JS Alvarez 2/20, 10 PM, Smart Bar



WOLF BY KEITH HERZIK

GOSSIP WOLF

A furry ear to the ground of the local music scene

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO Folklore Society has been booking marquee acts at its annual winter Folk Festival since 1960—the first one featured legends Roscoe Holcomb, the Stanley Brothers, Willie Dixon, and Elizabeth Cotten. Coming to **Mandel Hall** on Friday, February 14, and Saturday, February 15, the festival's 60th edition includes Pennsylvania-born traditional bluegrass pickers **Danny Paisley & the Southern Grass**, Cajun accordion powerhouse the **Jimmy Breaux Trio**, Tennessee golden-era country squad **Bill & the Belles**, fiddle-piano duo **Medicine Line** (who specialize in music of the Métis people along the western U.S.-Canada border), local Cuban dance band **Orquesta Charangueo**, and **Mariachi Sirenas**, who bill themselves as “Chicago's First All-Women Mariachi.” Evening concerts are ticketed, but the workshops and jam sessions at **Ida Noyes Hall** from 10 AM to 5 PM on Saturday are all free. For tickets and info, visit UofCFolk.org.

In case you're like Gossip Wolf and can't afford tickets to Sunday's **NBA All-Star Game** at the United Center, there are lots of related activities on the block. You could camp out for the **Joe Freshgoods** New Balance gear drop, but this wolf recommends Sunday afternoon's **Metro** show—the bonkers lineup includes **Polo G, G Herbo, Calboy, NLE Choppa, Ann Marie, Tink, Dreezy**, and **SBG Kemo**. Tickets are \$41 and benefit Polo G's Amateur Athletic Union basketball team, the Boys & Girls Club of Chicago, and depression-awareness nonprofit Erika's Lighthouse.

On Saturday, February 15, **Mississippi Records** hosts the first annual **Marz Record Fair** at Marz Community Brewing's McKinley Park headquarters. The fair's dozen-plus vendors include several local labels (**International Anthem, Black Pegasus, Maximum Pelt**) and record stores (**Tone Deaf, Electric Jungle, Shady Rest**); some sellers will also DJ throughout the day. The event runs from noon till 8 PM. —**J.R. NELSON AND LEOR GALIL**

Got a tip? Tweet @Gossip_Wolf or e-mail gossipwolf@chicagoreader.com.



NATIONAL POLITICS

The Iowa fiasco and the Democrats' shadowy plot to stop Bernie

The party is using different tools to achieve the same goal as 2016—sidelining Sanders.

By **LEONARD C. GOODMAN**

Leonard C. Goodman is a Chicago criminal defense attorney and co-owner of the newly independent Reader.

Yogi Berra, the great Yankees catcher, had the memorable line, “It’s like déjà vu all over again.”

Bernie Sanders supporters might have been thinking the same thing after the fiasco of the Iowa caucuses.

It was just four years ago that the corporate hacks who run the Democratic Party rigged the 2016 primary election process to favor Hillary Clinton and stop Sanders: The Democratic National Committee, which is supposed to stay neutral in a primary, secretly funneled party funds to Hillary’s campaign, fed Hillary debate questions before a CNN town hall, and selected superdelegates who pledged their votes to Hillary before the first primary votes were even cast.

This time around, Democratic Party insiders appear to be playing the same game. Throughout 2019, corporate Democrats and their media allies disparaged and minimized Bernie’s campaign, asserting that it had little chance

of winning the nomination. But these tactics didn’t work. In late December, Sanders was leading in polling in Iowa, New Hampshire, and nationwide, and was close to the lead or within the margin of error in other important primary states like South Carolina, Nevada, California, and Texas.

I imagine that the forces of corporate greed feared that if Sanders could claim victory in the Iowa caucuses, he might gain momentum that would make him impossible to stop. To the rescue came a company called Shadow.

Shadow is one of these Democratic Party consulting operations stuffed with former staffers of Hillary Clinton’s failed 2016 presidential campaign. Shadow used its leverage with high-level Democratic donors to secure a contract with the Iowa Democratic Party to count the votes. And it completely bungled the job. The company tried to report results in the caucuses through an untested app slapped together in a few months. The app prevented precinct chairs from reporting the vote totals on caucus night, throwing the entire process into chaos, humiliating the Democratic Party, and demoralizing the Iowa voters who took

PAUL WEAVER / FLICKR

the time to come out and caucus. It also denied Sanders the opportunity to make a victory speech, although he won the popular vote and at least tied the pledged delegate allocation.

The dark money group that launched Shadow was cofounded by Tara McGowan, a veteran of Obama’s reelection campaign, and the wife of a senior strategist with the Pete Buttigieg campaign, which paid Shadow \$42,500 last July for digital services. These conflicts of interest apparently failed to raise any alarm bells at party headquarters.

Buttigieg’s investment in Shadow paid off big when Iowa officials announced partial results that allowed him to claim victory. Moreover, by paying Shadow for data services, Buttigieg signaled to the Democratic Party operatives—a loose alliance of consultants, corporate lobbyists, and pundits—that if elected, he will keep the money flowing to these bandits, despite their terminal corruption and incompetence. It’s no wonder that he’s a favorite of the party establishment and Wall Street donors. Sanders, on the other hand, is a mortal threat to this consultant class and to their business model of collecting checks for doing horrible work.

The corporate donors to the Democratic Party fear and loathe Sanders because he is not in their pockets. Unlike the so-called “centrist” Democrats, Sanders does not accept corporate contributions, and he does not do fund-raisers with high-dollar contributors. Instead he relies on a large army of small donors. This makes him incredibly dangerous to the corporate elite.

In the 1990s, President Bill Clinton pivoted the Democratic Party into partnership with Wall Street and with the same corporate donors funding the Republican Party. In effect, the Democratic Party sold its soul for corporate dollars. As a result, the Democrats have become a faux opposition party, taking on Republicans only in areas where their corporate patrons don’t have a stake, like abortion rights and gay rights. But when it comes to bank bailouts, forever wars, fossil fuel extraction, and for-profit health care, the Democrats are all in.

You don’t have to take my word for this. Numerous academic studies have confirmed that corporate interests get their way, no matter which party holds power. The comprehensive 2017 study *Democracy in America?* by political scientists Benjamin Page and Martin Gilens posits that “the wishes of ordinary Americans [have] little or no impact on the making of federal government policy.”

To cite just one recent example, last February, ExxonMobil announced the discovery of a gas field off the coast of Cyprus that’s one of the largest found in recent years. This December, members of Congress came together quietly, without hearings or debate, to provide military assistance in the development of this gas field. The winner, of course, is corporate America. ExxonMobil profits from the gas extraction, and a private company called General Atomics benefits from the drone fleet that will be maintained in the region to protect the operation. The losers, as always, are the American people, who will pay for all the military operations while all the profits from the drilling go to private corporations—a blatant form of corporate welfare. The other big loser is the environment. Tapping into another gas field will speed the destruction of the planet. Plus, offshore gas drilling produces methane, a greenhouse gas more potent than carbon dioxide when emitted.

Sanders is a threat to this bipartisan business-as-usual model of corporate profits over the needs of ordinary Americans. If elected, Sanders has pledged to pursue policies that benefit people over corporations, like free college, Medicare for all, and a green new deal.

The forces of corporate greed and the military-industrial complex seem prepared to stop Sanders at all costs. As Biden fades from contention, they are putting their money on Mayor Pete. If he stumbles, the party is prepared to install Michael Bloomberg at a brokered convention. Bloomberg, the world’s eighth richest man, has \$61.9 billion at his disposal to influence the Democratic Party. The DNC has already changed its rules to allow Bloomberg to qualify for the debates. That, coupled with the Iowa caucus fiasco, have fueled calls for the resignation of DNC head Tom Perez.

The Democratic Party’s embrace of Bloomberg puts the lie to the excuse that Sanders should not be nominated because he is not sufficiently loyal to the Democratic Party. Until just recently, Bloomberg was a Republican. In 2004, Bloomberg endorsed George W. Bush, praising his decision to invade Iraq.

The chaos of recent weeks might give Sanders supporters their most potent argument yet. The Democratic Party has become so corrupt and dysfunctional that it can’t even perform the most basic function of a democracy: counting the votes. It is time to turn to new leadership. Or we can stick with the corporate Democrats and blame the Russians again when we lose to Trump. 

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OPINION

SAVAGE LOVE

I pegged my boyfriend and now he wants to be 'the girl'

Kinky sex can be wonderful, but it won't fix your relationship.

By **DAN SAVAGE**

Q: My boyfriend and I were having relationship issues until we tried something new: pegging. He wanted to try it, but he was afraid and sometimes said the idea disgusted him. Then we tried it, and it was better than normal vanilla or even kinky bondage sex. It was the most emotionally connected sex we've ever had. I actually pegged him three times in 24 hours. He says now he wants to be "the girl" in our relationship. He doesn't want to transition to become a girl, but to be more "the girl" sexually and emotionally. I see this as sexy and loving. I've always taken care of him in a nurturing way, but this adds so much more. I feel bad about sending this long story just to ask a simple question, but... how do I be more "the guy" for my boyfriend who wants to be more "the girl"? Not just sexually, but in everyday life? —**THE BOYFRIEND EXPERIENCE**

A: "It's amazing these two found each other," said Key Barrett, a trained anthropologist. "They communicate and obviously create spaces to be vulnerable together and explore."

Barrett has studied female-led relationships (FLR) and written books—fiction and nonfiction—about them, TBE, and his first concern was your boyfriend succumbing to "sub-frenzy," or a burning desire to realize all his fanta-

sies at once. You guys aren't new to kink—you mention bondage—but you've found something that taps into some deep-seated desires, and you don't want to move too fast. "Pegging opened up a huge box of shiny new emotions and feelings," said Barrett. "That's great, but they should take it slow, especially if they want this dynamic to be a part of the day-to-day relationship."

You also need to bear in mind that pegging, while wonderful, won't solve your underlying "relationship issues." Unless, of course, the issue was your boyfriend feeling anxious about asking you to peg him. If he was worried about walking back his previous comments, or worried you would judge, shame, or dump him over this, that could have been the cause of your conflict, and the pegging—by some miracle—was the solution.

But, hey, you didn't ask about those other issues, so let's focus on your actual question: you being "the guy" and your boyfriend being "the girl."

"The boyfriend wants TBE to be 'the guy' in the relationship to reinforce his desire to be 'the girl,'" said Barrett, "and she seems okay with this, although she does acknowledge that this would require more than the nurturing and caretaking she's already showed toward him. That's a valid concern. His desire to take the kink out of the bedroom and merge it

with the day-to-day risks turning her into a kink dispenser. There's also the aspect of the boyfriend's gender stereotyping. Being dominant isn't unique to men, and being submissive isn't a 'feminine' trait. There are a lot of alpha men in FLRs who shine in support roles for the women they trust. Female-led relationships don't rely on stereotypes. Indeed, they often flout them by relying not on stereotypical behaviors but on what is a natural dynamic for the couple. In that sense, each FLR is unique."

While it's possible that "I want to be the girl" are the only words your boyfriend has to describe the dynamic that turns him on, for some men, sacrificing their "male" power and privilege is an intrinsic part of the eroticism of submitting to a dominant woman. And that's okay, too.

"If he legitimately wants to take on a role of supporting her and being her adoring submissive partner while thinking of that role as 'feminine,' it could work for them," said Barrett. "He might really enjoy supporting her decisions and being more of a domestic partner. She might enjoy the support and validation that comes from having a partner who revels in her successes and strength. This could fulfill the 'caring for him as if I were the boyfriend' portion (what a loving a statement!) while still feeling natural for TBE."

So how can you get started as "the guy" in this

OPINION

relationship?

"They should, again, start small," said Barrett. "Maybe delegate a few tasks that were 'hers' to him, and she can tell him how she wants them done," whatever it is (dishes? laundry? cocksucking?), "as this will help ensure the outcome they both want. I would also recommend they both read about what FLRs are and aren't. FLRs are often kink-friendly, but kink is not required. And they need to remember the key word in 'female-led relationship' is 'relationship.'"

Q: I'm a woman, and I was contacted on an app by someone claiming to be a "guydyke." Based on their profile pictures, I was basically looking at a white, cis, masc-presenting man who's said he is queer but only attracted to women. And by masc-presenting, I mean I could not pick him out of a lineup of the most average of average-looking straight dudes: drab clothes, a week's stubble, bad haircut. Granted, nobody is obliged to announce their gender identity through clothing or grooming choices, but how is this guy not straight? —**PERPLEXED**

A: "I happen to be one of those 'old-school' lesbians, despite not actually being what most consider to be old," said Arielle Scarcella, a popular lesbian YouTuber

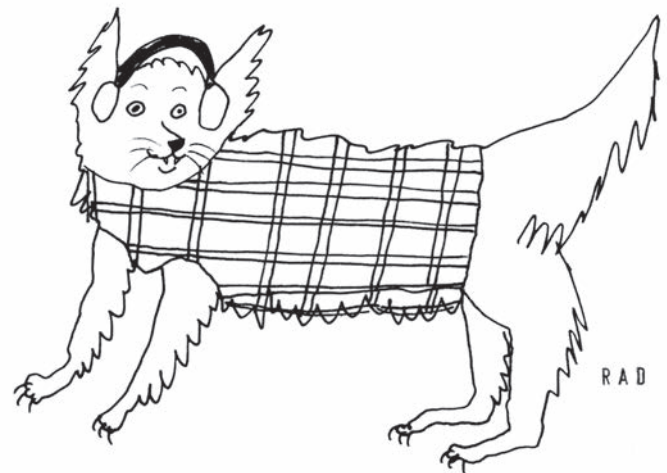
with more than 600,000 subscribers. "Back when I was coming out in 2005, if a male person who lived as a man—a male who lived in such a way that he was always perceived to be a man—claimed he was a lesbian or a dyke, we'd shut them down. But in 2020, it's only acceptable to accept everyone for what they say they are. I disagree. Part of being a lesbian, being a woman, is also cultural and societal. It's not simply an identity. Living in the world as a woman *matters*. A biological male who presents as a man and has sex only with women will never know what it's like to be treated as a woman or a lesbian. He can identify however he likes, of course, but he will be perceived as a straight man who's fetishizing queer women."

Q: I'm in my late 20s and genderfluid. I have a male physique, but at times I feel more feminine. I suddenly can't shake the desire to have more feminine breasts. I've been looking at women with C or D cups and wishing I had boobs that big. I've spent time looking into breast enhancement, but I live in the midwest. It's not as bad as the south, but there are still plenty of people who believe violating gender norms is a sin. I guess I don't know what I'm trying to ask other than whether this is

normal. —BRO OBSESSED OVER BUST SIZE

A: It's not normal—in the literal, non-pejorative sense—for an "assigned male at birth" person who presents as male to want to slap large boobs on his otherwise male-presenting physique. But so what? If you're worried about how your boobs will be received there in the midwest, perhaps you could get yourself a pair of what drag queens call "chicken cutlets," i.e., silicone breasts enhancers that tuck into a bra, and try wearing them out. For the record, kids, I'm not equating being genderfluid with drag, even though many drag queens (but not all) identify as genderfluid and many genderfluid people (but not all) do drag. (I never get tired of tap-dancing my way through this minefield.) But back when I was doing drag, BOOBS, a pair of chicken cutlets artfully placed under my pecs created a pretty realistic looking set of big ol' titties. Think of chicken cutlets as a temporary, nonsurgical breast-enhancement option—to test the locals as well as your desire to have breasts. **A**

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BA deg domestic or equ deg in Comp Sci, Comp Eng, Elect Eng, or related field + 5 yrs exp. In lieu of BA + 5 yrs exp will accept a MS + 3 yrs exp. Tools used/req: 5 yrs exp w/ comp langs as C#, .NET, JAVASCRIPT, AND HTML; 1 yr exp w/ each of the following: Exp w/ MVC, SITECORE, JSON/RESTFUL APIS, WEB SERVICES, SERVICE & MESSAGE BUS OPTIONS, XML/SOAP, HTTP; Security concepts & standards, such as OAUTH, SAML, SHIBBOLETH, PCI DSS, PII, ENCRYPTION, and TOKENIZATION req; SQL Experience. **Will accept any combo of edu, training, & exp. Send resumes to Attn: M. Oster, Wi-Tronix, LLC, 631 E Boughton Rd, Suite 240, Bolingbrook, IL, 60440. No calls.

ActiveCampaign, LLC seeks Software Engineers for Chicago, IL loc. Bachelor's in Comp Sci/related field +2yrs exp req'd. Req'd Skills: 2 yrs w/design, implement & maintain an automated marketing platform; large scale (user base of 50K+) systems written in PHP; front-end eng; MySQL db; data warehousing; dev & use rest APIs; object-oriented language; Javascript; writing automated tests. 1 yr w/ DEVOPS. Send resume to: Trinity Malito ActiveCampaign, 1 N Dearborn St STE 500, Chicago, IL 60602, Ref: DB

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LEGAL NOTICES

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to "An Act in relation to the use of an Assumed Business Name in the conduct or transaction of Business in the State," as amended, that a certification was registered by the undersigned with the County Clerk of Cook County. Registration Number: Y20003121 on February 4, 2020 Under the Assumed Business Name of Salon V Rose with the business located at 6309 W. Diversey Ave., Chicago, IL, 60639 The true and real full name(s) and residence address of the owner(s)/partner(s) is: Susan Narvaez, 3404 W. Shakespeare, Chicago, IL, 60647

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to "An Act in relation to the use of an Assumed Business Name in the conduct or transaction of Business in the State," as amended, that a certification was registered by the undersigned with the County Clerk of Cook County. Registration Number: Y20003125 on February 4, 2020 Under the Assumed Business Name of DIVINELY ORDERED LIFE CELEBRATIONS with the business located at 3265 W. PALMER STREET UNIT 2, CHICAGO, IL 60647 The true and real full name(s) and residence address of the owner(s)/partner(s) is: CYNTHIA-VAL CHAPMAN 3265 W. PALMER STREET UNIT 2, CHICAGO, IL 60647, USA

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STATE OF ILLINOIS, PUBLICATION NOTICE OF COURT DATE FOR REQUEST FOR NAME CHANGE. Location Cook County - County Division - Case Type: Name Change from Ki Won Lee to Kiwon Julian Lee. Court Date March 25, 2020, 9:30 AM in Courtroom #1706 Case # 2020CONC000047

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to "An Act in relation to the use of an Assumed Business Name in the conduct or transaction of Business in the State," as amended, that a certification was registered by the undersigned with the County Clerk of Cook County. Registration Number: Y20003012 on January 17,

2020 Under the Assumed Business Name of MJM OCCASIONS with the business located at 3022 SARAH ST, FRANKLIN PARK, IL 60131 The true and real full name(s) and residence address of the owner(s)/partner(s) is: JASON MARTINEZ, 3022 SARAH ST FRANKLIN PARK, IL 60131, USA; MONICA J MARTINEZ, 3022 SARAH ST FRANKLIN PARK, IL 60131, USA

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to "An Act in relation to the use of an Assumed Business Name in the conduct or transaction of Business in the State," as amended, that a certification was registered by the undersigned with

the County Clerk of Cook County. Registration Number: Y20003018 on January 21, 2020 Under the Assumed Business Name of ABOVE GRADE APPLIANCE SERVICE with the business located at 6545 W DICKENS AVE. APT. 2W, CHICAGO, IL 60707 The true and real full name(s) and residence address of the owner(s)/partner(s) is: RAFAL MAJOREK 6545 W DICKENS AVE. APT. 2W, CHICAGO, IL 60707, USA

STATE OF ILLINOIS, PUBLICATION NOTICE OF COURT DATE FOR REQUEST FOR NAME CHANGE. Location Cook County - County Division - Case Type: Name Change

from Alberto Alonso Blasquez to Alberto Alonso. Court Date April 13, 2020, 9:30 AM in Courtroom #1706 Case # 2020CONC000200

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to "An Act in relation to the use of an Assumed Business Name in the conduct or transaction of Business in the State," as amended, that a certification was registered by the undersigned with the County Clerk of Cook County. Registration Number: Y20003003 on January 16, 2020 Under the Assumed Business Name of SUDDEN UNIVERSE with the business located at 11001 DEBLIN LN APT 101, OAK LAWN, IL 60453

The true and real full name(s) and residence address of the owner(s)/partner(s) is: MARK RICHARD BERNAL 11001 DEBLIN LN APT 101, OAK LAWN, IL 60453, USA

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to "An Act in relation to the use of an Assumed Business Name in the conduct or transaction of Business in the State," as amended, that a certification was registered by the undersigned with the County Clerk of Cook County. Registration Number: Y20003074 on January 27, 2020 Under the Assumed Business Name of FISH AMONG BICYCLES with the business located at 1301 W FLETCHER

ST #602, CHICAGO, IL 60657 The true and real full name(s) and residence address of the owner(s)/partner(s) is: SARA MICHELE BIEKER, 1301 W FLETCHER ST #602, CHICAGO, IL 60657, USA

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to "An Act in relation to the use of an Assumed Business Name in the conduct or transaction of Business in the State," as amended, that a certification was registered by the undersigned with the County Clerk of Cook County. Registration Number: Y20003049 on January 22, 2020 Under the Assumed Business Name of TWISTED KITTY KOCKTAILS with the

business located at 4700 S. LAKE PARK 308, CHICAGO, IL 60615 The true and real full name(s) and residence address of the owner(s)/partner(s) is: KATHERINE THOMAS, 4700 S. LAKE PARK 308, CHICAGO, IL 60615

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to "An Act in relation to the use of an Assumed Business Name in the conduct or transaction of Business in the State," as amended, that a certification was registered by the undersigned with the County Clerk of Cook County. Registration Number: Y20003048 on January 22, 2020 Under the Assumed Business Name of GARRETT'S

IRISH DANCE GOODS with the business located at 3640 N. KEDZIE AVE, CHICAGO, IL 60618 The true and real full name(s) and residence address of the owner(s)/partner(s) is: MARY LANGE 3640 N. KEDZIE AVE, CHICAGO IL 60618, USA

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